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**THE EFFECT OF EMPOWERMENT ON BURNOUT OF  
FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE  
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS**

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**THE EFFECT OF EMPOWERMENT ON BURNOUT OF  
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by

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## **Dedication**

To my mother in law, Youngshin Oh, for her invaluable help and sacrifice

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**THE EFFECT OF EMPOWERMENT ON BURNOUT OF  
FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN HEALTH AND HUMAN  
SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE STATE OF TEXAS**

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The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the level of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in health and human service organizations. Also, this study investigates the relationship between each dimension of empowerment—control, competence, and valued goals—and employees' level of burnout. In order to focus on the aforementioned

relationships, this study takes into account background factors such as socio-demographic and employment characteristics. Data for the present study were taken from the Survey of Organizational Excellence, which was administered by the state of Texas to assess the organizational effectiveness of state employees. This study employs a series of multiple regression analyses in order to address the effect of the level of empowerment on the level of burnout—as well as the effect of the level of each dimension of empowerment on the level of burnout—for female employees in these health and human service organizations. The results indicate that female employees who perceive higher levels of control, competence, or valued goals—that is, empowerment taken as a whole—on the job experience lower levels of burnout. In addition to the effect of empowerment or the dimensions of empowerment, it was found that various background factors influence the level of burnout perceived by female employees in workplace. Finally, the author discusses the methodological limitations of this study, its implications for management and social work practice, as well as some recommendations for further research.



## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study .....	1
Theoretical Foundation.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2. Review of the Literature.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Empowerment .....	11
The Structural Approach to Empowerment.....	13
The Motivational Approach to Empowerment .....	15
The Leadership Approach to Empowerment.....	21
Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment.....	26
Dimensions of Perceived Empowerment in the Present Study .....	29
Control.....	29
Competence .....	31
Valued goals .....	32
Empirical Studies of Empowerment and Burnout .....	35
Burnout.....	38
Definition of Burnout .....	38
Antecedents of Burnout .....	40
Consequences of Burnout.....	42
<b>CHAPTER 3. Data and Methodology .....</b>	<b>44</b>
The Survey Instrument .....	45
The Survey Development .....	45
Survey Administration and Design .....	46
Validity and Reliability .....	47
Data Utilized for the Study .....	49
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	51
Measurement of Variables.....	52
Burnout.....	52
Empowerment .....	54
Socio-demographic Characteristics and Employment Characteristics .....	54
Summary .....	56
<b>CHAPTER 4. Data Analyses .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Descriptive Statistics .....	61
Socio-demographic Characteristics .....	61
The Employee's Individual Socio-demographic Characteristics .....	61

Household Wage Earner Status and Number of Persons in the Household .....	62
Employment Characteristics.....	64
Employment status .....	64
Compensation .....	66
Intent to Work .....	66
Factor Analysis of Three Dimensions of Empowerment .....	67
Multivariate Analyses.....	69
The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout .....	69
Research Question 1 .....	69
The Effect of the Dimensions of Empowerment on Burnout .....	82
Research Question 2 .....	83
The Effect of Control on Burnout.....	83
The Effect of Competence on Burnout.....	88
The Effect of Valued Goals on Burnout.....	92
Summary .....	96
<b>CHAPTER 5. Discussion .....</b>	<b>98</b>
The Effects of Background Factors on Burnout.....	98
Socio-demographic Characteristics .....	98
Employment Characteristics.....	101
The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout .....	104
The Effects of the Dimensions of Empowerment on Burnout .....	105
The Effect of Control on Burnout .....	105
The Effect of Competence on Burnout.....	105
The Effect of Valued Goals on Burnout.....	106
<b>CHAPTER 6. Implications for Management, Social Work Practice, and Research....</b>	<b>107</b>
Implications for Management.....	107
Reward System.....	107
Access to Resources .....	109
Professional Training.....	110
Leadership .....	111
Supervisory Style .....	113
Participative Management .....	114
Implications for Social Work Practice .....	116
Professional Training.....	116
Interpretive Intervention.....	118
Implications for Future Research .....	120
Limitations.....	122
Conclusions .....	124
<b>References .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Vita.....</b>	<b>146</b>

## List of Tables

TABLE 1. DEFINITIONS OF VARIABLES .....	57
TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF VARIABLES AND REFERENCES.....	60
TABLE 3. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS .....	63
TABLE 4. EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS.....	65
TABLE 5. COMMON FACTOR LOADINGS ON THE ITEMS OF THE EMPOWERMENT CONSTRUCT .....	68
TABLE 6. RESEARCH QUESTION, HYPOTHESIS, AND VARIABLES IN MODEL 1 – 4.....	70
TABLE 7. THE EFFECT OF EMPOWERMENT ON BURNOUT .....	71
TABLE 8. FINDINGS IN MODEL 1 – 4.....	81
TABLE 9. RESEARCH QUESTION, HYPOTHESIS, AND VARIABLES IN MODEL 5 .....	84
TABLE 10. THE EFFECT OF CONTROL ON BURNOUT.....	85
TABLE 11. FINDINGS IN MODEL 5 (CONTROL DIMENSION OF PERCEIVED EMPOWERMENT).....	88
TABLE 12. RESEARCH QUESTION, HYPOTHESIS, AND VARIABLES IN MODEL 6 .....	89
TABLE 13. THE EFFECT OF COMPETENCE ON BURNOUT .....	90
TABLE 14. FINDINGS IN MODEL 6 (COMPETENCE DIMENSION OF PERCEIVED EMPOWERMENT).....	92
TABLE 15. RESEARCH QUESTION, HYPOTHESIS, AND VARIABLES IN MODEL 7 .....	93
TABLE 16. THE EFFECT OF VALUED GOALS ON BURNOUT .....	94
TABLE 17. FINDINGS IN MODEL 7 (VALUED GOALS DIMENSION OF PERCEIVED EMPOWERMENT).....	96

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study**

In the mid 1990s, 46 % of the labor force in the United States was comprised of women. This equates to 65 million of the 108 million women who are 16 years or older currently in or entering the labor pool. Estimates provided by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor project that one half of the U.S. labor force will be women by the end of the first decade of this new century (Women's Bureau, 2000). The parity in the numbers of males and females in the workforce is a notable milestone in the transformation of the labor pool. Over the course of 75 years (or a woman's average life expectancy), women have moved from occupying a relatively small minority of formal workforce positions, to comprising nearly half of the jobs in the U.S.; that is, to nearly equal the number of positions held by men.

The financial responsibilities of American families have also shifted as more women participate in the labor pool. In 1998, approximately thirty-five million families in the U.S. had children under the age of eighteen. In this demographic, women were identified as the sole financial providers in 7.7 million (22 %) of the families (Women's Bureau, 2000).

While there is growth in the percentages of women acting as the sole financial providers for their households, there continues to be a reported disparity

between median weekly earnings in the full-time salaries of men and women.

Frequently, reports estimate that on average women only make 70 % of the total earnings made by men. Furthermore, The Department of Labor reports that 27 % of the women reported as being head of household and sole financial providers for their families had an earned income that is below the poverty level (Women's Bureau, 2000).

This income disparity coupled with the increase in employment of women has led to serious labor management challenges, and these challenges appear to be compounded for working women who have additional family responsibilities. A report by the Women's Bureau (1996) frames the problem in this way: "working women, regardless of race, ethnic group membership, job status, and family income level, feel tired, unsupported, and unacknowledged in the daily challenge of being both wage earner and family caretaker" (p.19). The lack of both support and acknowledgement of accomplishments recorded in this study are feelings that are commonly related to the concept of empowerment. In a similar study, The Family and Work Institute, a nonprofit research center focusing on providing data for policy and decision makers, examined women's perceptions of the work place. What this center found was that one out of three working women perceived their workplaces as unsupportive of their joint responsibilities to both work and family (Women's Bureau, 1996). Since 22 % of the women in the workforce have the dual responsibilities of raising children and being the sole providers for their family, and

since there is a considerable percentage of women employees not satisfied with the level of support given to work and family issues, it seems like a more comprehensive understanding of this issue is needed.

Many different areas of the literature report high levels of burnout and stress among American workers and, because of organizational and economic changes, also high levels of powerlessness. Or in our words, low levels of empowerment. Job stress, specifically being unable to meet job expectations, was found to be the most powerful predictor of burnout (Poulin & Walter, 1993). According to one report (Women's Bureau, 1994), working women identified stress as the number one problem in their work life. Also, working women suffer burnout even greater than men do (Schwartz, 1996) and almost 60 % of working women identified stress as a significant problem regardless their income levels and occupations (Women's bureau, 1994).

Burnout costs not only for individual workers but also their employers. It indirectly results in the loss of organizational resources through increases in hidden expenses such as sick leave, related insurance premiums, and lowered productivity and creativity. Stress and burnout have been shown to increase the utilization of sick leave, to contribute to on-the job-accidents, and enlarge employee turnover (Survey of Organizational Excellence, 1996). Studies show that employees with burnout problems are more likely to have higher absenteeism rates, perform inferior work, and make costly mistakes (Smith, 1999). The costs related to these burnout

conditions indicate commensurate organizational expenses (Survey of Organizational Excellence, 1996). Costs for job burnout or job stress in US businesses are estimated as much as \$200 billion annually, a number which includes a 10 % rise in stress-related workers' compensation claims in the past 15 years (Smith, 1999).

Despite the importance of women workers' contributions to today's economy, not enough is known about the factors that may contribute to a decrease in burnout problems affecting female employees. For these reasons, using empirical methods to establish what factors might be useful in reducing the effects of burnout on female employees could substantially improve the lives of employees and also eliminate the costs organizations incur in dealing with these problems.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that is characterized by physical depletion, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and emotional drain, as well as distress, discontent, and feelings of failure in the pursuit of ideals. Furthermore, burnout creates negative self-concepts and negative attitudes towards work, life, and other people. (Pines, Aronson, & Kaefry, 1981).

Empirically identified factors related to burnout include personal factors such as age (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993), education (Streepy, 1981; Schulz, Greenley, & Brown, 1995), tenure (Schulz et al. 1995), and working hours (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993), along with organizational factors such as insufficient

recognition (Shinn, Rosario, Morch, & Chestnut, 1984) and, opportunity for promotion (Oktay, 1992), frustration with regard to one's own expectations, pressure concerning clients' improvement (Shinn et al., 1984), availability of resources (Poulin & Walter, 1993; Carney et al., 1993; Beck, 1987), social support (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993; Davis-Sacks, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1985; Coady, Kent, & Davis, 1990; Maslach, 1982), team-like organizational structures, a clan culture, and transformational and transactional leadership (Schulz et al., 1995; Lundy & Younger, 1994).

Additionally, unresponsive bureaucratic environments were found to contribute to burnout (Oktay, 1992), and burnout is related to insufficient autonomy in employing knowledge and skills to perform one's job (Schulz et al., 1995; Arches, 1991; Dwyer, Schwartz, & Fox, 1992; McCloskey, 1990; Pines et al., 1981). Similarly, lack of control over one's work was reported as a predictor of burnout (Pines et al., 1981; Hibbard & Pope, 1987). Also, a lack of autonomy has been found to be closely related to burnout (Arches, 1991; Dwyer et al, 1992; McCloskey, 1990). Since bureaucracies tend to have circumscribed authority, downward channels of command, specialization, and formal accountability and hierarchy, all of which reduce employees' autonomy and control, they have a tendency to increase burnout (Pines et al., 1981).

On the one hand, a lack of autonomy on the job as well as a lack of control over one's environment can serve as sources of stress to employees, and this stress



leads to burnout. It was reported that repeated experiences undergoing situations over which people have no control resulted in motivational and effective debilitation defined as burnout (Pines et al., 1981). In addition, it was found that jobs where employees have low levels of control were associated with poorer mental health on the part of employees and thus symptomatic of burnout (Hibbard & Pope, 1987). Often employees' autonomy and control are undermined in a particular organization by specific bureaucratic characteristics such as administrative pressures on the worker, unnecessary rules, and a lack of voice in decisions that affect one's job and life. Such factors related to lack of autonomy and control as uncertainty of outcome of work, importance of that outcome to the workers, and the workers' perception of their competency to control that outcome were reported to be causes of work stress (Pines et al., 1981). In short, unresponsive bureaucratic structures coupled with work stress stemming from a lack of personal control over an employee's environment substantially increase burnout.

Conversely when employees are allowed to participate in decision-making about matters that affect them through democratic styles of leadership, they enjoy high levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout (Lundy & Younger, 1994). Employees are empowered in jobs where they are "supported and encouraged by the organization's leadership to have an active role in organizational change, a high level of employee control over their work environment, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making process" (Landuyt, 1999, p.79). Employees need to access

knowledge and information necessary to carry out their jobs; receive support such as feedback from other people whom they work with; and acquire material, money, and rewards necessary for accomplishing the demands of the job to be empowered (Miller, Goddard, & Laschinger, 2001), while burnout develops when employees perceive their organizations to undervalue them and their creativity, work, dedication, or innovation. One effect of this perception is that employees who are extremely exhausted tend to be at a greater risk of exhibiting alienation, isolation, lack of motivation, and negative outlook toward the organization (Landuyt, 1999).

There is a growing base of both empirical work and practical experience that suggests employees' experience of burnout is affected by the extent to which they feel that they can control events at work or at home. Also, some studies (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997; Laschinger, Finegan, & Shamian, 2001) show that empowerment influences job satisfaction, stress, and work effectiveness that have been reported to be related to burnout (Poulin & Walter, 1993; Lundy & Younger, 1994; Smith, 1999).

In addition, Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason (1997) found similar results from their study of empowerment as a cognitive state of the individual being empowered (in other words, an internal process or psychological state of the individual) and its relation to work satisfaction, job-related strain, and effectiveness. Also, Laschinger, Finegan, & Shamian (2001) found that heightened levels of psychological empowerment (perception of empowerment) of nurses significantly decreased their

job strain while increasing their work satisfaction. The findings of these studies suggest that empowerment may be a contributing factor to lowering burnout rates.

Most of the studies on empowerment were conducted within the private sector. Research on employee empowerment either in human service organizations or in public organizations is sparse (Thomas, 1988; Miranda, 1999; Shelton, 2002). Among the findings, there is that managers' perception of their control was one of the antecedents to employees' perception of control as empowerment (Parker & Price, 1994). Additionally, the consequences of empowerment include coping skills and psychological health (Gutierrerez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995) along with an increased sense of control (Yoon, Han, & Seo, 1996).

Although there are very few empirical studies on the relationship between empowerment and burnout, Rawana (2001) found perceptions of empowerment were significantly related to global burnout, a result which suggests the importance of psychological empowerment's relation to burnout. In addition, the findings of Miranda's (1999) study of the relationship between empowerment and burnout partially supported the existence of a relationship between these two constructs. The study found that of the four elements in Spreitzer's measure of empowerment only a 'sense of personal accomplishment' had a significant inverse relationship with burnout.

In addition, Thomas (1991) found empowering practice had a significant inverse relation to employee burnout, a result which held for employees in both

human service and private industries. Thomas (1991) recommended that the study of empowering practices and burnout should be replicated using various demographic variables such as the educational level, age, and race of employees.

Many of the studies of empowerment—including studies regarding the relationship between empowerment and burnout—employed different definitions of empowerment and used a variety of different measurements. Therefore, the findings of these studies have only limited external validity.

In summary, a lack of autonomy and control over one's job along with the situations of low empowerment created by too many bureaucratic barriers, are among the documented antecedents of burnout. Burnout resulting from low levels of empowerment leads to an individual's high intention to leave his or her job, lowered job satisfaction, poorer job performance, poorer physical and mental health, and increased organizational cost. In contrast, psychological empowerment was found to influence job satisfaction, stress, and work effectiveness.

Hence, based on the framework suggested by existing literature, this study examines the relationship of the level of burnout with the degree of workplace empowerment and with its dimensions, as they were perceived by female employees. Prior research leads to the development of the following research goals.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the present study is to identify the predictors of female employees' burnout in the workplace in order to explore ways to reduce the individual, organizational, and societal costs of that burnout. To accomplish this purpose, the present study posed the following research goals on the foundation of previous theoretical research and empirical studies.

1-a. To examine the relationship between the level of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace.

1-b. To investigate the relationship between each dimension of empowerment—control, competence, and valued goals—with the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Empowerment**

In the past, the term empowerment has been broadly used to refer to many different concepts by many different researchers in organizational science. More currently, empowerment as a distinctive construct has begun to receive close scrutiny as to its conceptualization (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1992; Menon, 1995).

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), in the literature the term empowerment can be categorized into two groups differentiated by their approach to power. In the first category, which they call the structural approach, empowerment is viewed as a relational construct from the sociological tradition (Tyman, 1988). In the second category, empowerment is defined from the perspective of the psychological tradition, which sees it as a motivational construct. In addition to these two groups, Tyman (1988) classified the leadership approach to empowerment (empowerment through leadership) as a distinct category from the others. The leadership approach to empowerment is a more specified stream of research on the role of leadership in empowerment situations. In short, this categorization provides three lines of research: the structural approach, the motivational approach, and the leadership approach.

As Menon (2001) has pointed out, the term empowerment has been used in many different ways in the organizational context. Sometimes, the word empowerment is used to refer the act of empowering others (e.g., Kanter, 1983). In the structural approach and the relational approach to empowerment, the term empowerment is mostly used in this way.

Also, the term empowerment is used to denote the process underlying the experience of power in the intra-personal cognitive activity that occurs within the individual (e.g., Thomas & Velthouse, 1990); in other words, the process of impacting empowerment through the loop consisted of the conditions, the empowering experience, and the effects of the empowerment occurring within the organization (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988). In the motivational approach, it is this process to which the term empowerment refers.

The other use of the term empowerment is to describe the internal state of the individual employee who is being empowered. The focus of this use is on the cognitive and psychological state of the individual experiencing empowerment (e.g., Spreitzer, 1995; Menon, 2001). To sum up, the word empowerment is used in diverse ways, referring to such different conceptions as the act, the process, and the state of empowerment.

In this dissertation, the literature pertinent to empowerment is comprehensively reviewed in three groups (combining the two group categorization of Conger and Kanungo's [1988] and the three group categorization of Tynon

[1988]): empowerment as a relational construct (the structural approach to empowerment or the empowering act), empowerment as a motivational construct (the motivational approach to empowerment or the empowering process), and the inducement of empowerment through leadership (the leadership approach to empowerment).

In addition, the literature related to the dimensions of psychological empowerment (the cognitive/psychological state of individual being empowered) is specifically reviewed in order to provide the definition used in this dissertation.

### The Structural Approach to Empowerment

In the literature, the construct of empowerment has its root in the construct of power. Depending on the approach to studying power, empowerment is viewed differently, either as a relational construct or a motivational construct.

The relational perspective is from sociological approach viewing power as a relational concept. From the perspective, power has been used to describe ability to influence others in social exchange. From the relational perspective, in the context of organization, power is ability to influence organizational outcomes (Mintzberg, 1983). As Conger and Kanungo (1988) stated, at the organizational level, power over an organization is concerned with ability to offer valued performance or resource to organization (Pfeffer, 1982). And power over others at the interpersonal level is concerned with an individual's structural position, the personal



characteristics, the expertise, and potential to access specialized knowledge or information (French & Raven, 1959; Bacharach & Lawler, 1980).

According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), the assumptions underlying this relational concept of power are individuals with power tend to accomplish their desired outcomes while the individuals who are deficient in power tend not to achieve desired outcomes. From this orientation, the focus was given to the development of strategies to reallocate resources to redistribute power from powerful individuals to the individuals who lacks power (Bucher, 1970; Kotter, 1977, 1979; Mowday, 1978; Pettgrew, 1972; Pfeffer, 1981; Plot & Levine, 1978; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974, as cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Empowerment from this relational perspective is the process of sharing power with subordinates by powerful parties. In this meaning, empowerment is equated with the process of the granting of power or delegation of authority over organizational resources (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) or over decision makings (Gruber & Trickett, 1987) and empowerment in the organization was suggested to come from having a more flat hierarchy, decentralized decision making, and more participation of employees (Kanter, 1977).

In the management literature, this relational perspective of empowerment, as the process of the delegation and the decentralization of decision-making power, received central attention. And based on this relational understanding of empowerment, many researches were conducted on participative management and

employee involvement in decision-making (Sattler & Sohoni, 1999; Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000).

Because this perspective concentrates on empowerment in relation to “describing objective social condition, a top-down process of power sharing” (Spreitzer, 1992. p. 6) and power in the organization was suggested to rely on structural conditions such as hierarchical authority and network centrality (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984), it is also called structural approach (Tyman, 1988; Menon, 2001). Menon (2001) argued that this traditional structural approach has focal point on “the actions of the power-holders who transfer some power to the less powerful” (p. 156), thereby, the psychological state of individuals being empowered is not addressed by the research adopting this perspective.

### The Motivational Approach to Empowerment

As distinct from the relational perspective, the motivational perspective of empowerment from the psychological tradition views power as a motivational concept (McClelland, 1975) or an effort-performance expectancy belief state (the belief pertaining to that the employee’s effort will result in a desired level of performance) (Lawler, 1973; Rotter, 1966). Traditionally, this perspective on empowerment has received less attention in the literature than the relational perspective on empowerment. The construct of empowerment as a motivational

concept only began to be analytically developed in Conger and Kanungo (1988)'s work.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) proposed empowerment as motivational enabling where power was concerned with a need for self-determination internal to individuals (Deci, 1975) or a self-efficacy belief personal to individuals (Bandura, 1986). Conger and Kanungo (1988) define empowerment as “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (p. 474).

Based on this definition, the authors (1988) identified the process of empowerment as a series of five stages that comprise “the psychological state of empowering experience, its antecedent conditions, and its behavioral consequences” (p. 474). The first stage is the diagnosis of conditions within the organization accountable for employees' feelings of powerlessness. The organizational factors (e.g., poor communications and impersonal bureaucratic climate), supervision (e.g., high control and emphasis only on failure), reward system (e.g., arbitrary reward allocation and lack of competence-based reward), and job design (e.g., lack of appropriate authority/discretion and lack of network-forming opportunities) are included in the organizational conditions considered in this beginning stage.

The next stage is the use of empowerment strategies identified in the previous stage. Participative management, goal setting, a feedback system, modeling, contingent-competence based reward, and job enrichment are included in the strategies considered in this stage.

The third stage is to provide subordinates with self-efficacy information through the strategies implemented in the second stage. The aim of implementing the strategies in the second stage goes beyond removing the external conditions leading to powerlessness. The application of sources of self-efficacy necessary for subordinates to receive the self-efficacy information in this stage includes enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. In addition, at this stage the conditions identified in the first stage are removed.

Upon receiving self-efficacy information, subordinates feel empowered from the strengthening of their effort-performance expectancy or belief in personal efficacy. This fourth stage leads to a fifth stage, where the behavioral effects of empowerment, including the initiation/persistence of behavior, are necessary to accomplish the task objective.

The process of empowerment as enabling implies that managerial strategies that promote the employee's sense of self-efficacy will strengthen that employee's feeling of power. Conversely, any strategy that reduces the employee's sense of self-efficacy will heighten his or her feelings of powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Building upon Conger and Kanungo (1988)'s clarification of the concept of empowerment as a motivational construct, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) developed a more complex cognitive model of empowerment. In their model, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualize empowerment as the "changes in cognitive variables (called task assessments)" (p. 667) that determine motivation in workers.

Additionally, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) provided three improvements upon Conger and Kanungo's work (1988). First, they defined empowerment as intrinsic task motivation, a move which helped to make the concept more precise. Second, they identified a more complete set of task assessments that resulted in the motivation essential to empowerment. (For example, self efficacy in Conger and Kanungo's [1988] conceptualization of the perception of empowerment was supplemented by three additional task assessments in Thomas and Velthouse.) Third, they suggested the interpretive processes through which the employees reach their task assessments. Through interpretive processes, task assessments are influenced not only by objective conditions or events in the employees' work environments but also by employees' individual differences. They propose that employees' perception of empowerment is based on their judgment, that is, their subjective interpretation of reality (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believed, in their conceptualization of empowerment as a motivational concept, "energy" best describes the terms of "power"; therefore "to energize" best describes the terms of "to empower" (p. 667).

Energizing employees involves drawing on their commitments to the task itself rather than relying on strict controls and the contingent rewarding or punishment of employees. In their model, empowerment is operationalized in terms of intrinsic task motivation, where task refers to “a set of activities directed toward a purpose” (p. 668) and task assessments are viewed as the cause of this motivation. Further, in this model task assessments take place within the person, and they are thereby regarded as an interpretation or construction of reality. Therefore, the focus of this model is on intrapersonal cognitive processes. This cognitive model was operated by sequences of six elements. These six elements are 1) environmental events, 2) task assessments (i.e., impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice), 3) behavior (i.e., activity, concentration, initiative, resiliency, and flexibility), 4) global assessments (i.e., impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice), 5) interpretive styles (i.e., attributing, evaluating, and envisioning), and 6) interventions (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

The sequential operation of these elements flows as following: environmental events give information to the employee regarding the consequences of ongoing task behavior and the conditions and events related to future behavior. This information is viewed as determining the employee’s task assessments regarding impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. These task assessments, in turn, energize and maintain the employee’s behavior, and this behavior subsequently influences environmental events. In addition, the differences in employee task assessments can

be explained by two intrapersonal elements: global assessments and interpretive style. Global assessments are the employee's generalized beliefs resulting from previous task assessments, and interpretive styles are tendencies pertaining to an employee's interpretive processing of events. This processing gives the employee subjective information pertaining to evaluation, attribution, and envisioning, which results in effecting an employee's task assessments (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

In Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) cognitive model of empowerment, four dimensions of task assessments—impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice—serve as cognitive components of intrinsic motivation. “Impact represents a performance-outcome expectance, competence an effort-performance expectance, and meaningfulness an anticipated outcome valence (for intrinsic motivation), whereas choice represents the perceived opportunity for a decision based on these variables” (p. 672). In other words, impact refers to “the degree to which behavior is seen as ‘making a difference’ in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task, that is producing intended effects in one's task environment” (p. 672). In this model, competence is identical to Bandura's (1977, 1986) self-efficacy and refers to “the degree to which a person can perform task activities skillfully when he or she tries” (p. 672); meaningfulness refers to “the value of the task goal or purpose, judged in relation to the individual's own ideals or standards” (p. 672); while choice means self-determination and is concerned with having “causal responsibility for a person's action” (p. 672).

### The Leadership Approach to Empowerment

The leadership approach to empowerment describes empowerment as a leader's energizing influence on his or her subordinates through creating and sharing idealized future goals and appealing visions. By internalizing those goals and visions, employees are empowered and demonstrate the perceptions/attitudes of empowerment. The act of being energized through leadership is the core of this particular approach to empowerment.

Much of the academic literature on empowerment belongs to leadership research (e.g., Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Burke, 1986). Empowerment has been one of the major topics in the field of leadership and organizational culture. This relationship between leadership and empowerment was confirmed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990), who declared the importance of leadership literature's contribution to empowerment research. They claimed that the wide popularity of the term empowerment was due to its usefulness as a label for a nontraditional paradigm of motivation. Also, they insisted that there was "a search for alternative forms of management that encourage commitment, risk-taking, and innovation" (p. 667). In particular, this search for nontraditional paradigms of motivation has been vigorous in the fields of leadership and organizational culture "where research has shown how transformational and charismatic leaders can energize employees by tapping idealism



and building faith in the ability to accomplish meaningful goals” (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990, p. 667).

The search for alternative forms of management came about due to the limitations of the classical/bureaucratic paradigm which involved “strict controls combined with contingent rewards and punishments” (p. 667). In contrast to this classical/bureaucratic paradigm, where tasks are seen to have merely instrumental value to employees and where the employee’s role is mainly to comply with management, the new paradigm of empowerment involves controls that are broader and focuses on the employee’s internalized commitment to the task itself. In this new paradigm, the emphasis is “the importance of the ‘pull’ of the task rather than the ‘push’ of management (Berlew, 1986)” (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990, p. 667).

In describing how this “‘pull’ of the task” is created, the role of leadership has been emphasized. Bennis and Nanus (1985) asserted that the fundamental essential of organizational leadership is that “the leader’s style *pulls* rather than *pushes* people on” (p. 80). This “pull” style of leadership influence is created by management drawing the employees’ attention into an exciting vision and by energizing them toward this vision of the future. “A pull style of influence” induces through identification rather than rewards and punishments (p. 80).

Elsewhere, this pull style of leadership has been called transformative leadership. Transformative leadership is that of “one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of

change” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 3). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) have noted that in the work of Sharmir, House, and Arthur (1989) the most critical motivational aspect of charismatic, or transformational, leadership was the increased intrinsic value of goal achievement, a value that is generated by “the articulation of a meaningful vision or mission” (p. 668).

This effective leadership involves the articulation and embodiment of the ideals toward which the organization is endeavoring. Effective leaders motivate others to join in a vision of that ideal and to consider that vision both achievable and commendable (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). In addition, when the leaders provide formulated and articulated goals of the organization, these goals energize their subordinates and those subordinates are empowered to the degree that the goals are internalized (Kanungo & Medonca, 1996).

Bennis and Nannus (1985) described empowerment as the effect of transformative leadership on employees, saying that leaders “empower others to translate intention into reality and sustain it” (p. 80). According to their explanation of the empowering of others, power serves as “a unit of exchange—an active, changing token in creative, productive, and communicative transactions” (p. 80), rather than as an object of relinquishment. In addition, they presented four critical dimensions of empowerment including significance, competence, community, and enjoyment.

First, *significance* means the feeling of making a difference, both for the organization as well as in the greater world. Effective leadership creates a vision that makes the employees feel to be at the active center of their social environment. Additionally, it leads to an increased feeling of significance for employees (p. 82).

Second, *competence* means the increasing sense of mastery, development, and learning on the job. This sense of “ever-new horizons” both improves the employee’s performance and makes his or her performance aligned toward the organization’s goal (p. 83).

Third, *community* means sense of “family.” When employees feel that they are joined in a common purpose—in other words, when they have the feeling of a “sense of reliance on one another toward a common cause”—it indicates that they are feeling sense of community (p. 83).

Finally, *enjoyment*, or fun, means that work should be perceived as an enjoyable object or experience. Through empowerment, employees can become engrossed in “their games of work” so much that they would forget that their other needs are not satisfied. Nearly any experience is believed to be no less than potentially enjoyable. Since enjoyment does not rely on limited sources, empowerment improves the quality of work life as well as life itself (p. 83).

The sense of community is the only one of the four dimensions of empowerment stated above that was excluded from the motivational conceptualization of empowerment. As researchers looking at the motivational

approach to empowerment—such as Thomas and Velthouse (1990)—attempted to take into account the leadership literature in their conceptualizing of the concept of empowerment, some concepts in leadership research pertinent to their study were compromised during the transition from one model to the other. That is, many important concepts in leadership literature related to empowerment were not included in the motivational approach. For example, although Thomas and Velthouse’s (1990) model of the four cognitive elements of empowerment (impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice) contained some “motivational aspects of current leadership models that apply at the individual level of analysis” (p. 671), their model did not include “some uniquely ‘group’ content, such as a sense of community” (p. 671), content which is found in leadership-oriented models such as that of Bennis and Nanus (1985).

This exclusion of the concepts of leadership research from Thomas and Velthouse’s (1990) model of empowerment became more apparent in Spreitzer’s (1992) operationalization of the four dimensions of the empowerment, as will be explained more fully in this dissertation’s section on the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Therefore, this omission resulted in the presentation of empowerment through leadership as a distinctive category of empowerment literature.

### Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment

Conger and Kanungo (1988) argue that the psychological state of empowering experience is a feeling of self-efficacy, an idea which is expanded in the model of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) to become a feeling of multifaceted “increased intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual’s orientation to his or her work role” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443). Spreitzer (1995) called this psychological state of empowering experience psychological empowerment. By developing and validating the measurement of psychological empowerment, she operationalized the four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) comparable to those (meaningfulness, competence, choice, and impact) in the model of Thomas and Velthouse (1990).

Spreitzer’s dimensions of psychological empowerment are described as:

- Meaning, a dimension of the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), involves a fit between the requirements of one’s work role and one’s beliefs, values and behaviors (Brief & Nord, 1990).
- Competence, or self-efficacy specific to one’s work, is a belief in one’s capability to perform work activities with skill (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).
- Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one’s actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and reflects autonomy over the initiation and

continuation of work behavior and processes such as making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort (Bell & Staw, 1989; Spector, 1986).

- Finally, impact, the converse of learned helplessness (Martinko & Gardner, 1982), is the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989) (as cited in Spreitzer, Janasz, & Quinn, 1999, p. 512).

These four dimensions “comprise [the] very essence” (Spreitzer, 1997, p. 681) of empowerment instead of being predictors or outcomes of empowerment. These additively combined dimensions form an overall construct of psychological empowerment that serves as a sign of the active orientation of an employee to a work role (Spreitzer, 1995). In comparisons with passive orientation, active orientation concerns employees’ viewing their work roles and contexts to be shaped by their actions, and not viewing a work situation as being fixed and imposed upon them (Spreitzer, 1995). Having this active orientation at a given point of time indicates the employees’ psychological state of feeling empowered.

Likewise, Menon (2001) reviewed literature on the experience of power and on empowerment research and proposed that there are three major dimensions of the experience of power underlying the empowerment process at an individual level: (a) power as perceived control, (b) power as perceived competence, and (c) power as being energized toward achieving valued goals (goal internalization) (p. 159).

Having the goal internalization dimension, Menon (2001) argued, is necessary to represent psychological empowerment because it captures the “inspiring leadership or an exciting organizational vision” (p. 175) that is a critical aspect of empowerment, an aspect that has been alluded to by researchers including Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Conger (1989). Menon (2001), however, claimed Spreitzer’s (1995; 1996) measure does not have this crucial dimension and is therefore unable to address the empowering nature of leadership or the energizing goal in employees’ experiences of empowerment (Menon, 2001).

Proposing goal internalization as the unique feature of his formulation of empowerment, Menon (2001) provides a comparison of his formulation and that of Spreitzer’s. Instead of goal internalization, Spreitzer’s measure has the dimension of “meaning” which involves “a fit between the requirements of a work role and a person’s beliefs, values and behaviors” (Spreitzer, Janasz, & Quinn, 1999, p. 512). Menon (2001) claims that the items existing at the “meaning” dimension are limited to task level assessments which do not contain any direct or indirect mention of “the energizing power of a valued cause or a cherished goal” (p. 175). Contrary to Spreitzer, Menon’s (2001) goal internalization dimension concerns organizational goals and encompasses “the energizing effect of ideas, such as an inspirational goal” (p. 175).

As claimed by Menon (1995), when comparing the dimensions of empowerment as described by Menon and Spreitzer, it can be argued that the

dimension of perceived control in Menon's formulation theoretically corresponds to the dimensions of "self-determination" and "impact" in Spreitzer's scale. Also, the dimension of perceived competence in Menon's measure theoretically corresponds to the dimension of "competence" in the Spreitzer measure. However, in Spreitzer's measure, there is no exact counterpart of Menon's goal internalization dimension, though Spreitzer's "meaning" dimension seems to be conceptually comparable to it.

### Dimensions of Perceived Empowerment in the Present Study

In the present study, empowerment is viewed as enabling (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). In Conger and Kanungo's study (1988), perceived empowerment in the workplace is the employees' perception of whether or not their power needs are met. Perceived empowerment in the workplace is a fulfillment of intrinsic needs for control, competence, and valued goals. Here individuals are viewed to have an intrinsic need for power (McClelland, 1975, as cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The perceived empowerment construct is conceptualized to have three dimensions: control, competence, and valued goals. The next section is an explanation and description of these dimensions.

#### Control

A sense of perceived control was argued to be essential for feelings of power, in that it works as one of the psychological states representing the experience of



empowerment. Power was viewed as “an internal urge to influence and control,” where power and control are referred to as “motivational belief-states that are internal to individuals” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 472). Menon (2001) stated that this internal drive to control others (White, 1959) has been variously referred to as “the power motive or need for power (McClelland, 1961; Winter, 1973), effectance motivation (White, 1959), striving for personal causation (De Charms, 1968), and intrinsic motivation to feel competent and self-determining (Deci, 1975)” (p. 159). Also, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), the concept of control has been proposed under different names of research including primary and secondary control (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and learned helplessness (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980). The importance of perceived control has been suggested in both the literature of the relational approach and the motivational approach to empowerment. Menon (2001) cited the reports of many scholars in arguing for the importance of the role that perceived control played in employees’ feeling of empowerment. In the literature of the relational approach to empowerment, it was stated that empowering practices—including delegation, promoting participation, and making information and resources available to employees—can give employees a sense of perceived control (Kanter, 1983) and that having control of their environment makes employees feel confident and empowered (House, 1988). Similarly, in the literature of the motivational approach to empowerment, the importance of perceived control to empowerment was supported

by the notions that the empowerment process begins with the removal of conditions that result in powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) and that two core dimensions of psychological empowerment are impact (how much the behavior of individual can make a difference) and choice (how much the behavior of the individual is personally caused), both of which imply the importance of perceived control for psychological empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

### Competence

Perceived competence has served as one of the primary themes in empowerment research. A belief in self-efficacy, or perceived competence, was suggested to be at the core of empowerment by Conger and Kanungo (1988), Bennis and Nanus (1985), and Thomas and Velthouse (1990). According to Menon (2001), perceived competence is synonymous with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy, which is explained as the employees' belief in their potential to activate the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action necessary to satisfy certain situational demands (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Employees have a tendency to avoid situations that they believe surpass their coping skills. Conversely, they participate in activities that they believe to be within their capabilities to manage. As suggested by Bandura (1977), self-efficacy influences the initiation of an employee's effort. Therefore, a sense of competence is critical for this psychological enablement (Menon, 2001).

### Valued Goals

In the sense that word power can represent energy and strength, empowerment in the workplace is meant to energize employees. At the psychological level, working towards a goal—in other words, a valued cause or meaningful project—has energizing power for employees. Goal internalization is based on the argument that employees need to internalize the goals of an organization in order to be enjoined in the organizational cause. As observed in the examples of religious or missionary work and sovereignty movements, goals—when they are a mission or a valued cause—have the power to energize individuals involved in their work (Menon, 2001).

Menon (1995) argues that the logic of goal internalization is an important factor of psychological empowerment:

The employees would be inspired by the goal alone to the extent that it is intrinsically motivating. In the sense used here, an intrinsically motivating goal is one which generates energy for action due to its positive appeal to the individual. The goal may be appealing to the individual for any number of reasons. It could be congruent with personal values, it could provide clarity, meaning, and a sense of purpose, it could be intellectually stimulating and challenging and it could be seen as a possible solution to a salient problem. Intuitively, the more involved the individual is with the goal, the more the energy generated (pp. 26-27).

In addition, Menon (2001) stated that this link between intrinsically appealing work and internal work motivation has been adopted and supported by researchers on job tasks such as Hackman and Oldham (1980). The link has been reaffirmed in their job characteristics model and in the work of researchers in leadership practices such as visionary leadership and inspirational leadership (Bass, 1985), charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1988), and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978).

The result of this linking is that the importance of organizational leadership practices on the employees' internalization of organizational goals is emphasized. The employees' internalization of organizational goals depends on organizational leadership practice to "transform the beliefs and attitudes of employees in line with the organization's mission and objectives" (Menon, 2001, p. 160). Among the four dimensions of empowerment identified by Bennis and Nanus (1985), sense of significance, community, and enjoyment are believed to allude to the importance of the appeal of ideas and goal internalization in the employee's empowering experience in the context of the organization (Menon, 2001).

Menon (2001) called this aspect of empowerment "goal internalization." It was reported that the dimension of "goal internalization" on Menon's (2001) empowerment scale was highly correlated with the sub-scale category "meaning (or purpose)" on Spreitzer's (1993) empowerment scale. Both 'goal internalization' and 'meaning' dimensions are concerned with values and its fit between goals.

The energizing effect of goal internalization comes from its relationship to motivation. Goal internalization is linked to motivation based on internalized values (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and pure moral involvement (Etzioni, 1975). Goal internalization has a conceptual element in common with organizational commitment (Becker, 1992; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). One of the elements of organizational commitment is a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values (Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). According to research on organizational commitment, when there is goal congruence between an employee and an organization, the employees identify with and work towards organizational goals and values (Porter et al., 1974).

The term internalization refers to a process of influence designed to change an individual's opinion and behaviors. It occurs when "a worker accepts an influence attempt because the encouraged actions are congruent with a personal value system and/or are intrinsically rewarding to the individual" (Kelman, 1961, p. 65). Because people take on certain mind-sets and behaviors when the content values of those mind-sets and behaviors are congruent with their own values, goal internalization is called a source of motivation (Kelman, 1958).

Goal internalization is a term that refers to the *process* of internalizing goals into the individual's mind-set, while valued goals refers to cognitive *entities* like perceived control and perceived competence. Instead of calling this element of the enabling effect of internalized goals and values 'goal internalization,' I prefer to use

the term ‘valued goals’ because it presents employees as more active players in the determination of their internal processes and external behaviors, rather than making them passive objects of internalization. This is consistent with a view of employees as active participants in their work and work context in the new managerial paradigm of the empowerment approach.

In summary, in the present study the third dimension of perceived empowerment is ‘valued goals,’ which refers to a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values through the process of goal internalization, resulting in the employee having a sense of psychological ownership of their work and a sense of belongingness to the organizational purpose.

#### Empirical Studies of Empowerment and Burnout

Most studies on empowerment were conducted within the private industry sector. Research on employee empowerment either in human service organizations or in public organizations is sparse (Thomas, 1988; Miranda, 1999; Shelton, 2002). Many empowerment studies employed different definitions of empowerment and used a variety of measurements to track it, thus yielding only limited external validity. Among the findings, a precursor to employees’ perceived control and empowerment was for them to be managers’ self perception of control (Parker & Price, 1994). The consequences of empowerment include coping skills and

psychological health (Gutierrerez et. al., 1995), along with an increased sense of control (Yoon et. al., 1996).

In addition, there are studies that look at the relationships between empowerment and burnout. Rawana (2001) conducted a study of the influence of psychological empowerment and gender role on burnout using Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey. The study's participants were nurses employed at long-term care facilities. The study found that all ninety-six nurses' perceptions of empowerment were significantly related to global burnout, a result which suggested the importance of psychological empowerment as a factor related to burnout.

Thomas (1991) also investigated the relationship between empowering management practices and employee burnout in private industry and human service organizations on a group of participants consisting of graduates from the Master of Social Work and the Master of Business Administration programs at a University. In the study, empowerment was measured as empowering practice and it was found that empowerment is significantly inversely related to employee burnout for employees in both human service and private industries. The study used a survey consisting of the 24 empowering conditions and an adapted version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. From an analysis of 247 responses, Thomas found that the level of the perceived presence of empowering conditions and the reported level of burnout were inversely related in both human service and private industry organizations indicating

that those employees who perceive themselves to be empowered also report lower levels of burnout. In addition, supervisors were likely to report higher perceived levels of empowerment than non-supervisors. Meanwhile, the variables such as gender, years of experience, and years with current employer were not significantly related to empowerment in the study. Thomas (1991) recommended that the study of empowerment and burnout should be replicated using different demographic variables such as level of education, age, and race of employees.

Meanwhile, Miranda's (1999) study of the relationship between empowerment and burnout found partial support in the significant relationship between empowerment and burnout. The study applied Spreitzer's Empowerment Instrument to measure empowerment and the Maslach Burnout Inventory to assess burnout in a human service organization. Among the relationships of burnout with four empowerment elements (meaning, self-determination, self-efficacy, and sense of personal accomplishment), only "sense of personal accomplishment" was shown to have a significant inverse relationship with burnout.

As stated before, the problem in many of empowerment studies, including studies regarding the relationship between empowerment and burnout, is that the studies employed different definitions of empowerment and used a variety of measurements. As a result, the external validity of these studies is limited.



## Burnout

### Definition of Burnout

In burnout literature, burnout has been conceptually defined in numerous ways rather than in one accepted way. Even though there are minor differences between definitions, those definitions share common descriptions: burnout is an individual experience, burnout is explained in psychological descriptions, and burnout is a negative phenomenon for both the individual and the organization (Maslach, 1982).

In most definitions, burnout is viewed as a response to stress (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981; Cherniss, 1980). When burnout is seen the result of prolonged occupational stress (Brill, 1984), it is manifested as an exhaustive state in multiple ways, including physical, emotional, mental, and/or interpersonal states (Paine, 1982). From this unsuccessful coping process, burnout occurs when an individual employee is exposed over time to excessive demands that surpass rewards or the resources given to him or her to manage (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). The process leading to burnout is progressive. One of the ways to categorize this process is by the severity of the symptoms (Veninga & Spradley, 1981).

In their review of the literature, Hobfoll and Freedy (1993) described the historical development of the definition of burnout. The term burnout was first introduced by Freudenberger (1974) to describe a syndrome reported by employees

working in chronically demanding service organizations. The syndrome was “a combination of long-lasting emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, absence of job involvement, dehumanization of the recipients of one’s service, and lowered job accomplishment” (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993, p. 116). The concept of burnout was then widely applied to occupations in which there was heavy interaction with other people on the job (Veninga & Spradley, 1981). It was further expanded to include syndrome of all workers exhausted from excessive demands on their job (Weiskopf, 1981).

After Freudenberger, Maslach and Jackson (1981a) proposed a definition of burnout as a multidimensional concept comprised of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. They then developed The Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure this effect. In this measurement, emotional exhaustion is described as feeling emotionally depleted, drained, fatigued, and overextended by one’s job; depersonalization is defined as feeling negatively and impersonally towards clients, detaching oneself from them, and having an attitude of blaming others; finally, personal accomplishment is described as feeling that one has competently accomplished worthwhile tasks in one’s job and feeling one’s job is fulfilling (Maslach & Jackson, 1981b). To this definition, Pines and her colleagues expanded the concept of burnout by adding that it also consisted of a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment as a response to stress (Pines et al., 1981).

### Antecedents of Burnout

The problems reported in occupations that result in stress for human service workers are various and contain general job-related stressors that are observed in other professions as well. These empirically identified variables related to burnout include working hours (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993); overwork (Maslach, 1982); insufficient recognition (Shinn et al., 1984) or opportunity for promotion (Oktay, 1992); frustration with regard to one's own expectation; pressure concerning clients' improvement, and/or interpersonal and emotional demands (Shinn et al., 1984); and role conflict (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986).

In addition, there are numerous other variables that can be examined with regard to burnout. These include personal, client, and organizational variables. However, the empirical findings concerning personal variables related to burnout are inconsistent. While individual workers' personal characteristics were claimed to contribute to burnout (Maslach, 1982) and individual factors such as age (Williams, 1989; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993), self-esteem, (Poulin & Walter, 1993), as well as education (Streepy, 1981; Schulz et al., 1995) and tenure (Schulz et al., 1995) were found to be significantly associated with burnout. Soderfeldt (1995) has reviewed a number of studies of burnout and concluded that there was no significant relationship between most individual factors.

Client variables have also been studied for their relationship to burnout. Constant contact with clients in work has been identified to be a risk factor for burnout occurrence (Cedoline, 1982), and having clients with multiple service needs was found to be associated with burnout (Fahs Beck, 1987). Additionally, the degree of direct contact with a client was not found to be a contributing factor to burnout (Coady et al., 1990; LeCroy & Rank, 1986; Williams, 1989).

Organizational variables include several characteristics of the work environment such as availability of resources, social support, autonomy, and control. The more democratic the style of management and the structure of a work environment, the less likely those factors are to contribute to burnout. These democratic styles and structures include transformational and transactional leadership (Schulz et al., 1995; Lundy & Younger, 1994) and team-like organizational structures and clan cultures (Schulz et al., 1995). Also, having the resources necessary to perform one's work competently—including having access to adequate organizational resources (Poulin & Walter, 1993; Carney et al., 1993; Beck, 1987)—was reported to be an important factor in employee burnout.

In addition, social support was found to have an effect on decreasing burnout. Studies have found that the level and existence of support groups (Oktay, 1992), supervisor support (Poulin & Walter, 1993; Davis-Sacks et al, 1985), co-worker support (Coady et al., 1990), and the degree of support in the workplace (Maslach, 1982) are associated with lower burnout levels.

Unresponsive bureaucratic environments were also found to contribute to burnout (Oktay, 1992). Burnout is related to insufficient autonomy to employ knowledge and skills to perform one's job (Schulz et al., 1995; Arches, 1991; Dwyer et al, 1992; McCloskey, 1990; Pines et al., 1981). Similarly, a lack of control over one's work was reported as a predictor of burnout (Pines et al., 1981; Hibbard & Pope, 1987).

### Consequences of Burnout

Job burnout is a negative experience for the individual workers themselves, their workplaces, and the people around them. Beyond physical fatigue and debility, the possible consequences of burnout include psychological, social, and work-related problems for employees.

Pines and Maslach have argued that job-related stress, fatigue, or tedium lead to burnout, which manifests itself as a general loss of concern and feeling and emotional depletion (Pines & Maslach, 1978; Gaines & Jermier, 1983), resulting in the development of a negative self-conception and a negative attitude towards both work and clients (Pines & Maslach, 1978; Maslach, 1982).

The identified psychological effects of burnout on employees include insomnia, anger, anxiety, irritability, pessimism, passivity, impulsive behavior, hypersensitivity to criticism, mental blocks, depression, as well as more severe mental health problems such as substance abuse, paranoia, and psychosis (Farber &

Miller, 1981; Maslach & Jackson, 1981a; Spicuzza & Devoe, 1982). In addition, burnout leads to many problems in the workplace: increased absenteeism rates, low motivation, reduced productivity, ineffective work, on-the job-accidents, and higher turnover rates (Smith, 1999; Potter, 1985; Maslach et al, 1996; Burke & Richardsen, 1996; SOE, 1996).

Interpersonal problems are one of the effects of burnout. In addition to the negative effect of burnout on an individual worker's physical and psychological health and on the productivity of his/her workplace, the worker's relationships with people outside the workplace such as spouses, family, and friends are also affected by burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981a; Leiter & Durup, 1996). The effects of burnout are very far reaching, going beyond individual workers and outside their workplace.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose of the present study is to conduct a secondary data analysis of a data set in order to examine the relationship between the level of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees. This study also investigates how each dimension of empowerment—control, competence, and valued goals—is associated with the level of burnout. In order to identify the aforementioned associations, this study takes into account background factors such as socio-demographic and employment characteristics.

Data for the present study were taken from the Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE). SOE collected data from approximately 90 organizations totaling over 150,000 employees in the state of Texas in 2003. SOE is an assessment tool of organizational effectiveness and is administered biennially to state employees; the current format has been in place since 1993. The survey addresses workforce and workplace issues such as quality of service, performance training, cultural diversity, quality of work life, organizational communication, team effectiveness, and organizational creativity. The data from SOE have been used to provide baseline information for agencies about the functioning of the agency for a decade, and this survey is required by the state legislature as an assessment of how well human resources are being deployed.

## **The Survey Instrument**

### The Survey Development

The SOE measures the organizational climate of a business based on employees' perceptions. The SOE had its beginnings in Texas in 1979 when it was created at the request of the state's governor. At that time, faculty members in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin designed and administered a paper and pencil survey which was then called the Texas Employee Attitude Survey (Lauderdale, 1999).

In the early 1990's the survey was modified, incorporating new constructs and revising the items on survey instrument. The name of the instrument was changed to the Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE), and its sampling strategy was replaced with a census strategy to include all employees in the organizations being polled. These organizations, which pay a fee for each survey analyzed, have the option of doing the survey for either all employees or for a random sample of their employees.

Today the SOE is used by over 140 organizations in Texas and other states. Organizations surveyed include governmental, higher education, and local organizations. It is used in organizations with as many as 40,000 employees and as few as a half dozen.



### Survey Administration and Design

To administer the SOE, survey instruments are distributed to individuals via the mail and the internet. Therefore, employees could complete the survey anonymously either in print or online. In the 2003-2004 version of the SOE, the average agency response rate was 49%. Of all respondents, approximately 65% took the survey online. The survey takes approximately 25 minutes to complete. Each survey has a unique code number for validation—a scanned survey instrument for the print version, or an access code for the online version. This method of coding is intended to prevent the occurrence of duplicate surveys and fraudulent responses. Once a survey is validated, the code number identification is removed from the respondents' responses. In addition, for securing confidentiality, data are only reported for cells with five or more responses.

The SOE assessment consists of five Workplace Dimensions designed to capture the total work environment. Each Workplace Dimension is composed of several Survey Constructs. Among the 20 different constructs, two particular constructs, *empowerment* (modified empowerment construct for this study) and *burnout*, are used for the present study.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In the process of modifying the survey instrument and collecting data in 1993, a detailed protocol was created to guide the process. In planning meetings, various stakeholders, including governmental representatives, legislators, and representatives of agencies, participated in this process. In addition, several focus groups of the survey users were utilized. Twenty pre-tests in a number of state agencies were also conducted to ensure readability, reliability of the scales and items, the feasibility of survey administration, and the appropriateness of both content and the wording of items (Lauderdale, 1999). Furthermore, critiques of the survey items from survey users and people knowledgeable in the field were gathered through a review process (Landuyt, 1999). All of these methods were utilized to ensure the validity of content and reliable administration of the instrument.

The reliability and validity of the SOE were statistically examined throughout the survey development process, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.85 or greater for the completed scales. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.60 is suggested as the lower limit of acceptable level of internal consistency or reliability (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Back, 1998). In addition to the reliability of the scales, convergent validity was established through comparison with Maslach's Burnout Inventory and Dean's Alienation Scale.

Furthermore, construct validation on the survey was conducted. Construct validity is established when a measure has both convergent validity and discriminant

validity (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). In order to assess construct validity, the correlation of scores on the SOE empowerment scale (modified empowerment scale for this study) with scores on the Spreitzer (1995) empowerment scale as well as with the scores on the index of self-esteem (Hudson, 1992) were examined. The results of these comparisons demonstrated that the SOE empowerment scale had both convergent validity and discriminant validity.

More specifically, the convergent validity of the SOE empowerment scale was verified in that the scores on that scale were significantly and positively related to the scores on the Spreitzer (1995) empowerment scale (the correlation is 0.703). According to Rubin and Babbie (1997), “a measure has convergent validity when its results correspond to the results of other methods of measuring the same construct” (p. 179).

In addition, the discriminant validity of the SOE empowerment scale was verified by demonstrating that the scores on that scale corresponded more highly with the scores on Spreitzer’s (1995) empowerment scale (the correlation is 0.703) than they did with the scores on Hudson’s (1992) index of self-esteem (the correlation is 0.432). In order for a measure to have discriminant validity, it should correspond more highly to measures of the same construct (in this study, empowerment), than it does with conceptually distinct concepts (in the present study, self-esteem). According to Rubin and Babbie (1997), “a measure has discriminant validity when its results do not correspond as highly with measures of other

constructs as they do with other measures of the same construct and when its results correspond more highly with the other measures of the same construct than do measures of alternative constructs” (p. 179).

### **Data Utilized for the Study**

The samples used in the present study were drawn from the 2003-2004 SOE survey. For the purpose of this study, only data from “Health and Human Services” organizations were included. That is, an inclusion criterion of the data for this study is the classification of the organization as “Health and Human Services.” There were seven organizations of the state government classified as “Health and Human Services” by the governor’s article based on their missions. The description of this category is organizations involved in assisting people with health, economic, and mental development. The average response rate for these seven organizations is 58% in the data used.

The organizations included in the analysis are:

- (1) Texas Department of Human Services
- (2) Texas Department on Aging
- (3) Texas Department of Health
- (4) Health and Human Services Commission
- (5) Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services
- (6) Interagency Council on Early Childhood Interventions

(7) Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

For this study of burnout and empowerment, the reasons to choose only the health and human service organizations from the all agencies in state of Texas government are twofold. First, the health and human service organizations have been the main settings of burnout studies. Historically, the concept of burnout has been developed primarily on studies of participants in human service occupations. This is due in part to the comparatively higher levels of contacts with people in these occupations (Boles, Dean, Ricks, Short, & Wang, 2000). Because work in health and human service organizations commonly involves helping clients to solve difficult problems, the service providers largely work with the clients in the context of the difficult problems of clients or of the clients' situations. Maslach (1976) suggested the nature of these contacts, which are made in "a truncated and largely negative relationship with clients" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 165), is one cause of burnout.

Another reason is that, according to the SOE Similar Mission Benchmark scores in the 2001-2002, 2003-2004, and 2005-2006 surveys, in the state of Texas higher rates of burnout and lower empowerment have been reported from health and human service organizations than from other organizations. The SOE Similar Mission Benchmark scores are the average scores for the groups of state agencies in the state of Texas that participated in the SOE and that were grouped by the general mission of the organization. There are seven groups based on their general mission.

In the SOE 2001-2002, the highest burnout and the second lowest empowerment were reported from health and human service organizations among those seven groups of organizations. Also, in the SOE 2003-2004 survey, health and human service organizations had the second highest burnout and the second lowest empowerment rates reported. In addition, in the SOE 2005-2006 survey, the health and human service organizations had the highest burnout and the lowest empowerment reported. The other groups besides the health and human service organization group are general government, education, public safety/criminal justice, natural resources, business and economic development, and regulatory organizations.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Research question 1. What is the relationship between the level of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?

Hypothesis 1.1. Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

Research question 2. What is the relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?

Hypothesis 2.1. Female employees who perceive higher levels of control in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

Hypothesis 2.2. Female employees who perceive higher levels of competence in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

Hypothesis 2.3. Female employees who perceive higher levels of the valued goals in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

### **Measurement of Variables**

Four groups of variables were used in the analyses. The first variable concerned the level of burnout perceived by the respondent. The second variable group covered the level of empowerment perceived by the respondent. The third variable group involved socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent. And the fourth variable group pertained to the employment characteristics of the respondent. The definitions of the variables and the items in the survey instrument are described in the following sections while the variables employed in the analyses are presented in Table 1.

#### **Burnout**

The dependent variable employed in the analyses is burnout as measured through the burnout construct of the SOE (the Cronbach alpha of burnout construct is .8677). In the SOE design, the burnout construct refers to “a feeling of extreme mental exhaustion that negatively impacts employees’ physical health and job

performance, leading to lost organizational resources and opportunities”

(Lauderdale, 1999, p. 73).

The burnout construct contains five items in five point Likert-type scales from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The higher the score, the lower the level of burnout. The respondent’s perception of the level of burnout was derived from a composite average score of responses from the five items. Employees with low scores on the burnout measures are at greater risk of exhibiting alienation, isolation, lack of motivation, and negative outlook towards the organization. High scores suggested that employees did not perceive burnout in their position in the organization (Landuyt, 1999).

Five items in the *burnout* construct are:

- We feel a sense of pride when we tell people that we work for this organization
- We feel our efforts count
- We are encouraged to learn from our mistakes
- My job meets my expectations
- My ideas and opinions count at work



### Empowerment

The respondent's level of perceived empowerment as a whole was measured through the empowerment construct of the SOE. The scale of empowerment consisted of three sub-scales including control, competence, and valued goals (the Cronbach alpha of empowerment construct is .9151, the Cronbach alpha of control is .8158, the Cronbach alpha of competence is .7973, and the Cronbach alpha of valued goals is .8204).

The empowerment construct assesses the degree to which employees perceive that they have the capability to perform work with the skills to meet the work demand (competence), they have some control over their work and its environment (control), and they have a belief in valued organizational goals (valued goals). "This construct provides a picture of how employees view the organizational structure—as a supportive, efficient environment or as one in which the formal and informal hierarchy hinders progress and innovation" (Lauderdale, 1999).

The respondent's perception of empowerment as a whole was derived from a composite average score of responses from the twelve items. These twelve items were divided into three components of empowerment such as control, competence, and valued goals. Each component had four items. The definitions of three dimensions of empowerment are:

*Control*: having autonomy, choice, and impact over work, process, outcomes, and environment.

*Competence:* belief in one's capabilities to perform activities skillfully  
(Bandura, 1977; 1986)

*Valued goals:* belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values through the process of goal internalization that results in the employees having a sense of psychological ownership of their work and a sense of belongingness to the organizational purpose.

The scoring methodology of this construct is consistent with the burnout construct. "The higher the average composite score for this attribute, the more the employee feels empowered in the organization. Low scores noted a lack of empowerment" (Landuyt, 1999). The construct consists of twelve items.

*Control:*

- We feel the channels we must go through at work are reasonable
- Decision making and control are given to employees doing the actual work
- We are given the opportunity to do our best work
- People who challenge the status quo are valued

*Competence:*

- The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable
- We are efficient
- We have adequate resources to do our jobs
- The pace of work in this organization enables me to do a good job

*Valued goals:*

- We seem to be working toward the same goals
- There is a basic trust among employees and supervisors
- Within my workplace, there is a feeling of community
- Work groups are actively involved in making work processes more effective

Socio-demographic Characteristics and Employment Characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics included age, race/ethnicity, education, household wage earner status, and number of persons in the household. The employment characteristics included hours employed per week, length of service with the organization, supervisory role, whether or not the respondent had received a promotion or merit raise within the last two years, whether or not the respondent intended to work for the organization in two years, and the level of salary.

**Summary**

This chapter presented data and the methodology used to examine the relationship of socio-demographic variables, employment variables, and perceived empowerment with burnout among women employees in Texas government Health and Human Service Organizations. Table 2 shows the present study's related variables and applicable reference.

**Table 1. Definitions of Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b><i>Dependent Variable</i></b>	
Burnout	Continuous variable indicating the degree of burnout perceived by the women employee (Average of the scores of six items. Score range is from 1 to 6. High score indicating low degree of burnout)
<b><i>Empowerment Variables</i></b>	
Empowerment	Continuous variable indicating the degree of empowerment perceived by the employee (Average of the scores of twelve items. Score range is from 1 to 12. High score indicating high degree of empowerment)
Control as a dimension of empowerment	Continuous variable indicating the degree of control perceived by the employee (Average of the scores of four items. Score range is from 1 to 4. High score indicating high degree of perceived control)
Competence as a dimension of empowerment	Continuous variable indicating the degree of control perceived by the employee (Average of the scores of four items. Score range is from 1 to 4. High score indicating high degree of perceived competence)
Valued goals as a dimension of empowerment	Continuous variable indicating the degree of control perceived by the employee (Average of the scores of four items. Score range is from 1 to 4. High score indicating high degree of goal internalization)

*(table continues)*

Variable	Definition
<i>Background factors</i>	
<b><u>Socio-demographic Characteristics</u></b>	
Age (ref. 39 years or less)	Categorical variable
40-49	40-49 years old = 1, otherwise = 0
50+	50 years old or older = 1, otherwise = 0
Race/Ethnicity (ref. Anglo-American)	Categorical variable
African-American	African-American = 1, otherwise = 0
Hispanic/Mexican American	Hispanic/Mexican-American = 1, otherwise = 0
Others	Others = 1, otherwise = 0
Education (ref. High School Diploma or less)	Categorical variable
College	Highest educational level
Graduate	1 = Some college, associate degree or Bachelor degree, otherwise = 0
	Highest educational level
	1 = Graduate degree, otherwise = 0
Household wage earner status	Categorical variable
Primary wage earner	Primary wage earner = 1, otherwise = 0
Other wage earner in the household	There is more than one wage earner in the household = 1, otherwise = 0
Number of persons in the household	Continuous variable indicating the number of persons in the household (Score range is from 1 to 5. 1 = 1 persons – 5 = 5 persons or more)

*(table continues)*

Variable	Definition
<b><u>Employment Characteristics</u></b>	
Hours employed per week (ref. Less than 20 hours per week)	Categorical variable 20-39 hours = 1, otherwise = 0 40 or more hours = 1, otherwise = 0
Length of Service with the organization (ref. 2 years or less)	Categorical variable 3-10 years = 1, otherwise = 0 11 years and more = 1. otherwise = 0
Supervisory role	Categorical variable Currently in a supervisor role = 1, otherwise = 0
Promotion	Categorical variable Having received promotion during the last two years = 1, otherwise = 0.
Merit	Categorical variable Having received a merit increase during the last two years = 1, otherwise = 0.
Salary	Continuous variable Annual gross (before taxes) salary 1 = less than \$15,000. - 8 = \$ 75,001 or more
Intent to work for the organization in two years	Categorical variable Plan to be working for the organization in two years = 1, otherwise = 0

**Table 2. Overview of Variables and References**

<b>Variables &amp; Items</b>	<b>References</b>
<i>Burnout</i>	
We feel a sense of pride when we tell people that we work for this organization	Shinn et al. (1984)
We feel our efforts count	Kelly (1983)
We are encouraged to learn from our mistakes	Cherniss (1980)
My job meets my expectations	
My ideas and opinions count at work	
<i>Empowerment</i>	
<u>Control</u>	Kahnweiler & Thompson (2000), Rotter (1966)
We feel the channels we must go through at work are reasonable	Sattler & Sohoni (1999)
Decision making and control are given to employees doing the actual work	Thomas & Velthouse (1990)
We are given the opportunity to do our best work	Conger & Kanungo (1988)
People who challenge the status quo are valued	Bennis & Nanus (1985)
	Kanter (1977), Lawler (1973)
<u>Competence</u>	
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable	Thomas & Velthouse (1990)
We are efficient	Conger & Kanungo (1988)
We have adequate resources to do our jobs	Bandura (1977, 1986)
The pace of work in this organization enables me to do a good job	Bennis & Nanus (1985)
<u>Valued goals</u>	
We seem to be working toward the same goals	Kanungo & Medonca (1996)
There is a basic trust among employees and supervisors	Thomas & Velthouse (1990)
Within my workplace, there is a feeling of community	Sharmir et al. (1989)
Work groups are actively in making work processes more effective	Berlew (1986)
	Neilsen (1986)
	Bennis & Nanus (1985)
	Kanter (1977)
<i>Socio demographic characteristics include:</i>	Streepy (1981), Williams (1989)
Age, race/ethnicity, household wage earner status, and the level of education	Schulz et al. (1995)
	Poulin & Walter (1993)
	Oktay (1992)
<i>Employment characteristics include:</i>	
Length of service with the organization, supervisory role, promotion, merit increases, intent to work for the organization in two years, and salary	Schulz et al. (1995), LeCroy & Rank (1986), Oktay (1992), Shinn et al. (1984)

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSES**

To analyze the data, first the respondents' profile pertaining to the socio-demographic and employment characteristics were described. Next, a common factor analysis was performed in order to examine the presence of three distinct factors underlying the items on the empowerment construct. The results of these descriptive statistics and the factor analysis were then followed by multiple regression analyses regarding the effect of the variables on the level of burnout. Specifically, the effect of socio-demographic variables, employment variables, the degree of perceived empowerment as a whole, and each dimension of three dimensions of empowerment such as control, competence, and valued goals on the level of burnout were examined.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

##### Socio-demographic Characteristics

##### The employee's individual socio-demographic characteristics

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 3. The majority (60.3 %) of the female employees who responded were 30-49 years old. Another quarter (26.3 %) of the respondents were 50-59 years old. The majority of all respondents (50.2 %) were Anglo-American followed by



Hispanic/Mexican-American (28.0 %) and African-American (18.2 %). A substantial number—30.3 %—of the respondents reported that they had some college education. Another 10.2 % had earned an associate's degree, 32.7 % had earned a bachelor's degree, and 10.8 % had earned a graduate degree.

#### Household wage earner status and number of persons in the household

The survey had two wage earner status characteristics. The first asked if the respondent is the primary wage earner in her household. The second asked if there is more than one wage earner in her household. Among the respondents, about two-thirds (59.1 %) reported that they were the primary wage earners in their households, far more than non-primary wage earners (40.9 %) in the households. Furthermore, 39.8 % of the respondents reported that there were no other earners in their household, revealing that significant numbers of the female employees surveyed were their household's sole bread-winners.

The majority of the respondents (54.4 %) had two to three persons in their households including themselves. Another 30 % of the respondents had four or more people in the households.

**Table 3. Socio-demographic Characteristics**

Variable	Group	n	(%)
Age	16-29 years	1377	(10.3)
	30-39 years	3527	(26.3)
	40-49 years	4565	(34.0)
	50-59 years	3533	(26.3)
	60 years or older	417	(3.1)
Race/Ethnicity	Anglo-American	6625	(50.2)
	African-American	2403	(18.2)
	Hispanic/Mexican-American	3699	(28.0)
	Other	462	(3.5)
Education	Did not finish high school	101	(0.8)
	High school diploma (or GED)	2016	(15.2)
	Some College	4012	(30.3)
	Associate degree	1357	(10.2)
	Bachelor's degree	4332	(32.7)
	Graduate degree	1268	(9.6)
	Doctoral degree	157	(1.2)
Primary wage earner	Primary wage earner	7876	(59.1)
	Non-primary wage earner	5444	(40.9)
Other wage earner in the household	More than one wage earner in household	8047	(60.2)
	No other earner than the respondent in household	5317	(39.8)
Number of persons in the household	1 person	2081	(15.5)
	2 persons	4273	(31.9)
	3 persons	3013	(22.5)
	4 persons	2562	(19.1)
	5 persons or more	1459	(10.9)

Note: N=13513

Age: no response by 0.7 % of those returning surveys was given.

Race/Ethnicity: no response by 2.4 % of those returning surveys was given.

Education: no response by 2.0 % of those returning surveys was given.

Primary wage earner: no response by 1.4 % of those returning surveys was given.

Other wage earner in the household: no response by 1.1 % of those returning surveys was given.

Number of persons in the household: no response by 0.9 of those returning surveys was given.

### Employment Characteristics

The employment characteristics of the respondents can be divided into three areas. One area concerns employment status, including the number of hours employed per week, whether the respondent was in a supervisory role, and the length of the service she had with the organization. The second area concerns compensation, including the level of annual salary and whether or not the respondent has received a promotion or a merit raise within the past two years. The final area addressed the possibility of employee turnover by asking if the employee intended to still be working for the organization in two years.

### Employment Status

Most of the respondents (98.8 %) worked forty or more hours per week (see Table 4). Also, nearly half of the respondents (45.7 %) had worked for the organization for eleven or more years. Another 39.6 % reported that their length of service in the organization was three to ten years, while those who had worked for the organization for two years or less constituted 14.7 % of the respondents. In addition, only 19.1 % of the respondents indicated that they were in supervisory roles; a large majority (80.9 %) reported that they did not supervise any other employees.

**Table 4. Employment Characteristics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Hours per week employed	40 or more hours	13199	(98.8)
	20-39 hours	140	(1.0)
	Less than 20 hours	14	(0.1)
Length of service with the organization	Under 1 year	506	(3.8)
	1-2 years	1454	(10.9)
	3-5 years	2532	(18.9)
	6-10 years	2771	(20.7)
	11-15 years	2970	(22.2)
	Over 15 years	3138	(23.5)
Supervisory role	Supervisor	2558	(19.1)
	Non-supervisor	10826	(80.9)
Promotion	Received promotion	2808	(21.0)
	No promotion	10533	(79.0)
Merit increase	Received merit increase	3023	(22.7)
	No merit increase	10283	(77.3)
Salary	Less than \$15,000	296	(2.2)
	\$15,001-\$25,000	3425	(25.7)
	\$25,001-\$35,000	5420	(40.7)
	\$35,001-\$45,000	2891	(21.7)
	\$45,001-\$50,000	638	(4.8)
	\$50,001-\$60,000	397	(3.0)
	\$60,001-\$75,000	186	(1.4)
	\$75,000 or more	78	(0.6)
Intent to work in two years	Planned to work in two years	11223	(84.9)
	Did not plan to work in two years	1999	(15.1)

Note: N=13513

Hours per week: no response by 1.2 % of those returning surveys was given.

Length of service with the organization: no response by 1.1 % of those returning surveys was given.

Supervisory role: no response by 1.0 % of those returning surveys was given.

Promotion: no response by 1.3 % of those returning surveys was given.

Merit increase: no response by 1.5 % of those returning surveys was given.

Salary: no response by 1.3 % of those returning surveys was given.

Intent to work in two years: no response by 2.2 % of those returning surveys was given.

### Compensation

Only 21 % stated that they had promoted during the past two years while the majority of respondents (79 %) stated that they had not been promoted during the past two years. Moreover, less than one-quarter of the respondents (22.7 %) reported that they had received a merit increase over the last two years while the majority of employees (77.3 %) stated that they had not received such an increase.

The respondents were asked to estimate their annual gross salary by choosing from a set of monetary ranges given on the survey questionnaire. The employees with an annual salary of less than \$15,000 were 2.2 % of the all respondents and those with annual salary between \$15,001-\$25,000 were 25.7 %. Approximately 40 % of the female employees' annual salaries were between \$25,001-\$35,000. Less than one-quarter (21.7 %) reported an annual salary between \$35,001-\$45,000. Respondents with an annual salary over \$45, 000 comprised only 9.8 % of all female employees surveyed.

### Intent to Work

The survey respondents were asked if they planned to be working for the organization in two years. This question was used to assess the possibility of employee turnover. The majority of respondents replied that they intended to continue to work for the organization in two years. However, approximately 15 % of

the women surveyed indicated that they did not intend to work for the organization in two years.

### **Factor Analysis of Three Dimensions of Empowerment**

As explained in chapter three, control, competence, and valued goals were proposed as the three dimensions of empowerment. A common factor analysis was performed in order to verify that three distinct factors were actually measured. Principal axis factoring extraction with varimax rotation was performed on the twelve items in the empowerment construct. The result showed that these three dimensions of empowerment were present as theoretically suggested.

A percentage of variance criterion was used to determine the number of factors extracted. The criterion of a factor solution that accounts for about 60 % of the total cumulative variance (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) yielded to the three factors solution on the items of the empowerment construct. These three factors, together, explained 67 % of the variance.

The cutoff for factor loadings was set as .30 in order to meet the minimal level. Factor loadings greater than .30 are considered to meet the minimal level and loadings of .40 are considered more important. If the loadings are .50 or greater, they are considered practically significant (Hair et al., 1998). The factor loading for each of the three factors is shown in Table 5. Except one item on factor 1 (control

dimension), all eleven items had loadings greater than .40. Most of the items loaded on the three dimensions of empowerment as theoretically proposed.

**Table 5. Common Factor Loadings on the Items of the Empowerment Construct**

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
We feel the channels we must go through at work are reasonable	.422		
Decision making and control are given to employees doing the actual work	.624		
We are given the opportunity to do our best work	.477		
People who challenge the status quo are valued	.365		
The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable		.741	
We are efficient		.479	
We have adequate resources to do our jobs		.521	
The pace of work in this organization enables me to do a good job		.772	
We seem to be working toward the same goals			.435
There is a basic trust among employees and supervisors			.687
Within my workplace, there is a feeling of community			.667
Work groups are actively in involved in making work processes more effective			.483

## **Multivariate Analyses**

### The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout

#### Research Question 1

What is the relationship between the level of empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?

Hypothesis 1.1.

Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout

A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the effect of empowerment on burnout. Examination of the effect of empowerment on burnout began with estimating the bivariate relationship between these two variables and adding background variables followed it. In order to control possible effects of the background variables, these variables were sequentially added as a set to the subsequent models.

Model 1 demonstrates the impact of empowerment on burnout not taking into account any other variables. In Model 2, only socio-demographic characteristic variables were added to the variables of Model 1, which are empowerment and burnout. In Model 3, only employment characteristic variables were added to the variables of Model 1. In Model 4, both socio-demographic and employment



characteristic variables were added to the variables of Model 1. Table 6 presents the research question, hypothesis, variables included in Models 1–4.

**Table 6. Research Question, Hypothesis, and Variables in Model 1 – 4.**

Research question	Hypothesis	Variables included in Model
Research question1: What is the relationship between the level of empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?	Hypothesis 1.1. : Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout	Model 1: Burnout Empowerment  Model 2: Burnout Empowerment Socio-demographic characteristics  Model 3: Burnout Empowerment Employment characteristics  Model 4: Burnout Empowerment Socio-demographic characteristics Employment characteristics

The results of multiple regression analyses are presented in Table 7. In Table 7, Model 1 examined the effect of empowerment on burnout not taking into account any other variable. The dependent variable of burnout and the independent variable of empowerment were included in Model 1. Model 1 shows that the impact of

**Table 7. The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
<b>Empowerment</b>	.926***	.931***	.909***	.912***
<b><u>Socio-demographic Characteristics</u></b>				
Age [39 yrs or less]				
40-49		.023**		.011
50+		.028**		.029**
Race/Ethnicity [Anglo-American]				
African-American		-.083***		-.069***
Hispanic/Mexican-American		-.041***		-.026**
Others		-.033		-.020
Education [high school or less]				
College		.063***		.038***
Graduate		.153***		.103***
Household wage earner status				
Primary wage earner		-.008		-.012
Other wage earner in household		.014		.006
Number of persons in the household		-.004***		-.003
<b><u>Employment Characteristics</u></b>				
Hours employed per week [less than 20 hrs]				
20-39 hours			.130*	.108*
40 or more hours			-.026	-.023
Length of service with the organization [2 yrs or less]				
3-10 years			-.044***	-.042***
11 years and more			-.050***	-.049***
Supervisory role			.045***	.047***
Promotion			.057***	.059***
Merit increase			.027*	.031***
Salary			.041***	.026***
Intent to work for the organization in two years			.124***	.125***
<b>Intercept</b>	.426***	.366***	.282***	.295***
<b>R-squared</b>	.781	.785	.790	.792

Note: Reference category for all variables in brackets.

Cell entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001

empowerment on the level of burnout is significant ( $b=.926$ ,  $P<.0001$ ) indicating that female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace reported significantly lower levels of burnout than those who perceive a lower level of empowerment. In addition, empowerment accounts for approximately 78 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.781$ ). This finding reveals that the level of empowerment is negatively related to the level of burnout, not controlling for other variables.

In Model 2, socio-demographic characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, education, household wage earner status, and number of persons in the household were included in the model in addition to the burnout variable and the empowerment variable. In Model 2, the impact of the level of empowerment on the level of burnout remains significant in spite of inclusion of socio-demographic characteristics in the Model ( $b=.931$ ,  $P<.0001$ ). This result from Model 2 demonstrates the effect of empowerment on the level of burnout.

Among the socio-demographic characteristics, seven variables significantly affect the level of burnout. The measures of age, '40 to 49 years old' and '50 years and older' have a significant relationship with burnout. Employees in the 40 to 49 years old age bracket reported less burnout than those who were 39 years old or younger ( $b=.023$ ,  $P<.01$ ). Women employees who are 50 years or older also reported

less burnout than who are 39 years old or younger ( $b=.028$ ,  $P<.01$ ). This finding is consistent with other studies (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993).

Among the three measures of race/ethnicity, African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American have a significant relationship with the level of burnout (my analysis found no significant relationship between other ethnic groups and the level of burnout). Both African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American respondents reported higher levels of burnout than Anglo-American female employees. This study suggests that being African-American decreases a female employee's burnout score by 0.83 ( $p<.0001$ ) resulting in a higher levels of burnout (there is an inverse relationship between the burnout score and level of burnout). Similarly, being Hispanic/Mexican-American decreases the burnout score by 0.41 ( $p<.0001$ ) indicating that Hispanic/Mexican-American employees have higher levels of burnout. In this finding, the comparison between the coefficients of African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American demonstrates that being African-Americans is a factor that is likely to be related to having high levels of burnout than being any other ethnic group.

Among the measures of education, whether or not a respondent had a college or graduate-level education were both found to be significant predictors of burnout level. The respondents with a college education reported lower levels of burnout than those with high school education or less ( $b=.063$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Also, female employees with graduate education reported lower levels of burnout than those with high school

education or less ( $b=.153$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). The finding of the significant relationship between education and the level of burnout is consistent with other studies (Streepy, 1981).

However, the significant relationship between household wage earner status and the level of burnout was not found. Both the primary wage earner variable and other wage earner in the household variable have no significant relationship with the level of burnout. However, number of persons in the household did have a significant inverse relationship with the level of burnout ( $b= -.004$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). The more people in a household, the higher the level of burnout suffered by female employees. Altogether, in Model 2, the empowerment and the seven significant predictors of the level of burnout among socio-demographic characteristics account for 78.5 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.785$ ).

In Model 3, the impact on the level of burnout by empowerment as well as employment characteristics were estimated. The employment characteristics added in Model 3 included hours employed per week, length of service with the organization, supervisory role, promotion, merit increase, salary, and intent to work for the organization in two years. As presented in Table 7, a significant effect of the empowerment on the level of burnout was found in Model 3, similar to that found in Model 1 and Model 2. Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment show significantly lower levels of burnout than women with lower

level of empowerment ( $b=.909$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) regardless of the presence of employment characteristics in the Model.

In addition to the perceived level of empowerment, all eight employment characteristics, with the exception of the '40 or more hours employed per week' variable, were found to have significant effects on the level of burnout. Between the two measures of 'hours employed per week', only '20-39 hours' was found to be a significant predictor of the level of burnout ( $b=.130$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Female employees who are employed 20-39 hours per week reported significantly lower levels of burnout, compared to those who are employed for less than 20 hours per week.

For the measures of 'length of service with the organization', both '3-10 years' and '11 years and more' have significant inverse relationship with the level of burnout. The respondents who have been working in current organization for 3 to 10 years or for 11 years and more shows higher level of burnout than those who have been working for 2 or less years ( $b=-.044$ ,  $p<.0001$ ;  $b=-.050$ ,  $p<.0001$ , respectively). In addition, supervisory role was found to significantly affect on the level of burnout ( $b=.045$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Female employees who supervise other employees have lower levels of burnout than those who do not.

In the area of compensations, all three variables were found to be significant predictors of the level of burnout. The respondents who had been promoted during the last two years or the respondents who had received a merit increase during that time perceived a lower level of burnout than those who had not ( $b=.057$ ,  $p<.0001$ ;

$b=.027$ ,  $p<.0001$ , respectively). Furthermore, the respondents with a higher salary levels reported lower levels of burnout ( $b=.041$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), suggesting compensation, such as promotion, merit increases, and salary increases, is a formal forms of recognition and reward for employee performance. This finding is consistent with other studies (Shinn et al., 1984; Oktay, 1992).

The final employment characteristic was the employee's intent to work for the organization in two years, which was found to have a significant relationship with the level of burnout ( $b=.124$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Overall, in model 3 empowerment and the set of eight significant predictors accounted for 79 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.790$ ).

In Model 4, variables of both socio-demographic and employment characteristics were included in the Model in addition to the empowerment and burnout variables. As presented in Table 7, among the seven socio-demographic characteristics found as significant predictors of the level of burnout in Model 2, in Model 4 'age of 40-49 years old' and 'number of persons in the household' failed to remain significant predictors of the level of burnout. Except these two variables, the other five variables did to have significant effects on the level of burnout in both models. However, all eight employment characteristics variables which were found to be significant predictors of the level of burnout in Model 3 continue to have significant relationship with the level of burnout in Model 4.

‘Age of 50 years or older’ ( $b=.029$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), African-American ( $b=-.069$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), Hispanic/Mexican-American ( $b=-.026$ ,  $p<.01$ ), college ( $b=.038$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), and graduate ( $b=.103$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) were the variables that had significant impact on the level of burnout among the socio-demographic characteristics examined in Model 4. Also, among employment characteristics, ‘20-39 hours employed per week’ ( $b=.108$ ,  $p<.05$ ), length of service with the organization for 3-10 years or 11 years and more ( $b=-.042$ ,  $p<.0001$ ;  $b=-.049$ ,  $p<.0001$ , respectively), supervisory role ( $b=.047$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), promotion ( $b=.059$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), merit increase ( $b=.031$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), salary ( $b=.026$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), and intent to work for the organization in two years ( $b=.125$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) were also significant predictors of the level of burnout in Model 4.

Model 4 (See Table 7) shows the effect of the empowerment on the level of burnout when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics. Further, in Model 4, the effect of empowerment on burnout remains still significant ( $b=.912$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) when controlling for all other variables in the analysis. This result supports hypothesis 1.1. With every unit increase in empowerment, the burnout score increases by .912 showing the connection to higher empowerment.

The results of the regression analysis in Model 4 indicate that the set of predictors and empowerment account for 79.2 % of the variance in the respondents’ level of burnout ( $R^2=.792$ ). The inclusion of additional sets of predictor variables in this model slightly increased the variance explained in the level of burnout slightly.



The R Square of Model 4 increased only .011 compared to the R Square of Model 1, indicating that other significant predictors of burnout account for just a small portion (1.1 %) of the variance in burnout, indicating that a lack of empowerment explains most of the burnout in this model.

Additional analyses of the correlations (Pearson's product-moment correlations) between the level of burnout and the socio-demographic and employment characteristics revealed that only weak or very weak relationships existed between the two. Most correlations between burnout and socio-demographic and employment characteristics are very low based on MacEachron's (1982) rule of interpretation for the size of correlations.

When comparing the unstandardized regression coefficient for empowerment in Models 1–4 (as shown in Table 7), there appears to be a pattern in the changes in the regression coefficients. When socio-demographic variables were included in Model 2, the regression coefficient for empowerment was increased from .926 (in Model 1) to .931. Also, when socio-demographic variables were included in Model 4, the regression coefficient for empowerment was increased from .906 (Model 3) to .912.

These increases in the regression coefficients in Model 2 and Model 4 are due to the inclusions of the suppressors from the added socio-demographic variables, in the regression equations. In fact, the addition of the suppressor in the regression

equation eliminates the irrelevant variance in empowerment and improves the relationship between empowerment and burnout.

Suppression denotes that “the relationship between the independent or causal variables is hiding or suppressing their real relationships with Y, which would be larger or possibly of opposite sign were they not correlated” (Cohen & Cohen, 1983, p. 95). There are two suppressors found in Model 4: Hispanic/Mexican-American race/ethnicity and graduate education.

Hispanic/Mexican-American is a net suppressor since the signs of the simple and partial regression coefficients for Hispanic/Mexican-American differ (simple  $b = .098$ ; partial  $b = -.038$ ), for “[n]et suppression occurs when the simple and partial regression coefficients for one of the independent variables differ in sign” (Sharpe & Roberts, 1997, p. 23). Also, the interpretation of Hispanic/Mexican-American as a net suppressor is based on Cohen & Cohen’s (1975) correlation conditions for suppression and effect on standardized regression coefficients (as cited in Lewis & Escobar, 1986): the correlation between empowerment and Hispanic/Mexican-American is larger than 0 ( $r = .079 > 0$ ); the correlation between burnout and Hispanic/Mexican-American is larger than 0 ( $r = .052 > 0$ ); the correlation between burnout and Hispanic/Mexican-American is smaller than the correlation between burnout and empowerment multiplied by the correlation between empowerment and Hispanic/Mexican-American ( $r = .052 < r = .884 \times r = .079$ ); the partial standardized regression coefficient for Hispanic/Mexican-American is smaller than 0 (partial  $b = -$

.020 < 0); the simple standardized regression coefficient for Hispanic/Mexican-American is larger than 0 and smaller than simple standardized regression coefficient for empowerment ( $0 < \text{simple } b_{\text{Hispanic}} = .052 < \text{simple } b_{\text{empowerment}} = .884$ ); and the simple standardized regression coefficient for empowerment is smaller than the partial standardized regression coefficient for empowerment ( $\text{simple } b_{\text{empowerment}} = .884 < \text{partial } b_{\text{empowerment}} = .927$ ).

In addition, to this suppressor, graduate education is a cooperative suppressor. The partial regression coefficient for graduate education is larger in magnitude and it has the same sign as its simple regression coefficient ( $\text{partial } b = .112 > \text{simple } b = .016$ ), suggesting that it is a cooperative suppressor according to Sharpe & Roberts (1997). Also, the correlation between graduate education and empowerment is smaller than 0 ( $r = -.035 < 0$ ) while the correlation between burnout and graduate education is larger than 0 ( $r = .006 > 0$ ), suggesting cooperative suppression occurs (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

As explained, in Model 4, Hispanic/Mexican-American and graduate education function in the multiple regressions as suppressors of variances in empowerment, variances that are irrelevant to burnout. Removing that irrelevant variance increases the regression coefficient for empowerment.

To summarize, the significant individual effect of empowerment on the level of burnout constantly remained constant across all models. Female employees who

perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout; hypothesis 1.1. was supported, and a significant inverse relationship between empowerment and burnout was found. In Model 1, 78.1 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.781$ ) was solely explained by empowerment.

This result changed only slightly with the addition of socio-demographic characteristics in Model 2, where the level of empowerment along with socio-demographic characteristics accounts for 78.5 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.785$ ). In Model 3, empowerment and employment characteristics accounts for 79 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2=.790$ ), while in Model 4, empowerment and socio-demographic and employment characteristics collectively explain 79.2 % of variance in the level of burnout. Table 8 presents summary of findings from Model 1 through Model 4.

**Table 8. Findings in Model 1 – 4**

Research question 1	There is significantly inverse relationship between perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees	
Hypothesis	Hypothesis 1.1. was supported in Model 1 through Model 4 Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout	
Significant factors of burnout found in regression Models	Model 1	Empowerment
	Model 2	Empowerment Among Socio-demographic characteristics: Age 40-49 years old, Age 50 years old and older, African-American, Hispanic/Mexican-American, College, Graduate, Number of persons in the household
	Model 3	Empowerment Among Employment characteristics: 20-39 hours per week employed, Length of service for 3-10 years, Length of service for 11 years and more, Supervisory role, Promotion, Merit increase, Salary, Intent to work for the organization in two years
	Model 4	Empowerment Among Socio-demographic characteristics: Age 40-49 years old, Age 50 years old and older, African-American, Hispanic/Mexican-American, College, Graduate, & Number of persons in the household Among Employment characteristics: 20-39 hours per week employed, Length of service for 3-10 years, Length of service for 11 years and more, Supervisory role, Promotion, Merit increase, Salary, Intent to work for the organization in two years

## The Effect of the Dimensions of Empowerment on Burnout

### Research Question 2

What is the relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?

In order to examine the relationships between the three dimensions of perceived empowerment—control, competence, and valued goals—and the level of burnout, multiple regression analyses were conducted where each of the three dimensions of perceived empowerment was substituted for the empowerment construct as a whole. All variables, including burnout, each dimension of perceived empowerment, socio-demographic characteristics, and employment characteristics, were entered at the same time into a model.

### *The Effect of Control on Burnout*

Hypothesis 2.1. Female employees who perceive higher levels of control in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

The first dimension of perceived empowerment is control. The following Table 9 is an overview of research question, hypothesis, and the variables included in the regression model to examine the effects of control on burnout, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics.

**Table 9. Research Question, Hypothesis, and Variables in Model 5**

Research Question	Hypothesis	Variables included in the Model
Research question 2. What is the relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?	Hypothesis 2.1.: Female employees who perceive higher levels of control in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.	Burnout Control Socio-demographic characteristics Employment characteristics

The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 10.

Consistent with the hypothesis 2.1., the level of the respondent's control was significantly related to the level of burnout ( $b=.747$ ,  $P<.0001$ ), regardless of the presence of background variables such as including socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics. This indicates female employees who perceive higher levels of control in the workplace reported significantly lower levels of burnout than those who perceive lower levels of control. Among the socio-demographic characteristics, four variables are found to have a significant effect on the level of burnout. One of the two measures of age, '50 years and older' has a significant relationship with burnout. Employee who were in this age bracket reported less burnout than those who are 39 years old or younger ( $b=.042$ ,  $P<.01$ ).

**Table 10. The Effect of Control on Burnout**

Variable	Model 5
<b>Control</b>	.747***
<b><u>Socio-demographic Characteristics</u></b>	
Age [39 yrs or less]	
40-49	.014
50+	.042**
Race/Ethnicity [Anglo-American]	-.058***
African-American	-.047***
Hispanic/Mexican-American	-.030
Others	
Education [high school or less]	
College	-.004
Graduate	.063**
Household wage earner status	.004
Primary wage earner	.013
Other wage earner in household	
Number of persons in the household	.001
<b><u>Employment Characteristics</u></b>	
Hours employed per week [less than 20 hrs]	
20-39 hours	.167**
40 or more hours	-.035
Length of service with the organization [2 yrs or less]	
3-10 years	-.044**
11 years and more	-.049**
Supervisory role	.052***
Promotion	.046***
Merit increase	.033**
Salary	.026***
Intent to work for the organization in two years	.168***
<b>Intercept</b>	.850***
<b>R-squared</b>	.694

Note: Reference category for all variables in brackets.  
Cell entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients.  
\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001



Two of the three measures of race/ethnicity, African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American, also have a significant relationship with the level of burnout (there was no significant relationship between 'Others' and the level of burnout). Both African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American women employees reported higher levels of burnout than Anglo-American female employees. In this model, being African-American decreased a female employee's burnout score by 0.58 ( $p < .0001$ ) resulting in a higher level of burnout (lower burnout scores indicate a higher level of burnout). Similarly, being Hispanic/Mexican-American decreases an employee's burnout score by 0.47 ( $p < .0001$ ), indicating that Hispanic/Mexican-American employees have a higher level of burnout.

Additionally, between the two measures of education, only graduate education was found to be a significant predictor of burnout. Female employees with graduate education reported a lower level of burnout than those with high school education or less ( $b = .63$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, the significant relationship between household wage earner status and the level of burnout, and number of persons in the household and the level of burnout were not found.

As presented in Table 10, all eight employment characteristics, with the exception of the '40 or more hours employed per week' variable, were found to have significant effects on the level of burnout. Between the two measures of 'hours employed per week', only '20-39 hours' was found to be a significant predictor of the level of burnout ( $b = .167$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Female employees who were employed 20-39

hours per week reported significantly lower levels of burnout, compared to those who were employed for less than 20 hours per week.

In looking at the measures of 'length of service with the organization', both '3-10 years' and '11 years and more' showed a significant inverse relationship with the level of burnout. The respondents who have been working in their organization for 3 to 10 years or for 11 years or more showed a higher level of burnout than those who had been working for 2 or less ( $b = -.044$ ,  $p < .0001$ ;  $b = -.049$ ,  $p < .0001$ , respectively). In addition, whether or not the employee had a supervisory role had a significant impact on the level of burnout ( $b = .052$ ,  $p < .0001$ ); Female employees who were in supervisory position had lower levels of burnout than those who were not.

With regard to compensations, all three variables recorded in the survey were found to significantly influence on the level of burnout. The respondents who had been promoted during the last two years or who had received a merit increase during the last two years perceived lower levels of burnout than those who had not ( $b = .046$ ,  $p < .0001$ ;  $b = .033$ ,  $p < .0001$ , respectively). Furthermore, respondents with higher salary levels reported lower levels of burnout ( $b = .026$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

Finally, the respondent's intent to work for her organization in two years was also found to be significantly related to the level of burnout ( $b = .168$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). To sum up, in Model 5, the employee's level of control and the other twelve significant predictors of burnout accounted for approximately 69 % of the variance in the level of burnout ( $R^2 = .694$ ). Table 11 presents a summary of the findings in Model 5.

**Table 11. Findings in Model 5 (Control Dimension of Perceived Empowerment)**

Research question 2	There is significantly inverse relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees
Hypothesis	Hypothesis 2.1. was supported Female employees who perceive higher levels of control in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout
Significant predictors of burnout	Control Among socio-demographic characteristics: Age 50 years old and older, African-American, Hispanic/Mexican-American, & Graduate Among employment characteristics: 20-39 hours per week employed, Length of service for 3-10 years, Length of service for 11 years and more, Supervisory role, Promotion, Merit increase, Salary, Intent to work for the organization in two years

*The Effect of Competence on Burnout*

Hypothesis 2.2. Female employees who perceive higher levels of competence in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

The second dimension of perceived empowerment is competence. The following Table 12 presents an overview of the research question, hypothesis, and the variables included in regression model to examine the effects of competence on

burnout while controlling for the effects of socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics.

**Table 12. Research Question, Hypothesis, and Variables in Model 6**

Research question	Hypothesis	Variables included in the Model
Research question 2: What is the relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace?	Hypothesis 2.2.: Female employees who perceive higher levels of competence in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.	Burnout Competence Socio-demographic characteristics Employment characteristics.

Table 13 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis of the effect of competence on the level of burnout. Competence was found to have a significant association with the level of burnout ( $b=.648$ ,  $P<.0001$ ) when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics; hypothesis 2.2. was supported. With every unit increase in competence, the employee's burnout score increased by .648, indicating that the higher the perceived competence, the lower the level of burnout (higher burnout scores indicate a lower level of burnout).

**Table 13. The Effect of Competence on Burnout**

Variable	Model 6
<b>Competence</b>	.648***
<b><u>Socio-demographic Characteristics</u></b>	
Age [39 yrs or less]	
40-49	-.028*
50+	.011
Race/Ethnicity [Anglo-American]	
African-American	-.124***
Hispanic/Mexican-American	-.028*
Others	-.054
Education [high school or less]	
College	.028
Graduate	.115***
Household wage earner status	
Primary wage earner	-.030*
Other wage earner in household	.009
Number of persons in the household	-.002
<b><u>Employment Characteristics</u></b>	
Hours employed per week [less than 20 hrs]	
20-39 hours	.142
40 or more hours	.039
Length of service with the organization [2 yrs or less]	
3-10 years	-.142***
11 years and more	-.136***
Supervisory role	.126***
Promotion	.134***
Merit increase	.075***
Salary	.040***
Intent to work for the organization in two years	.252***
<b>Intercept</b>	.961***
<b>R-squared</b>	.552

Note: Reference category for all variables in brackets.  
Cell entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients.  
\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001

In Model 6 (Table 13), five out of ten socio-demographic characteristics were found to be significantly associated with the level of burnout. These significant predictors of the level of burnout in Model 6 are 'age of 40 to 49 years old' ( $b = -.028, p < .01$ ), African-American ( $b = -.124, p < .0001$ ), Hispanic/Mexican-American ( $b = -.028, p < .01$ ), graduate ( $b = .115, p < .0001$ ), and primary wage earner ( $b = -.030, p < .05$ ).

In addition, all employment characteristics, except the 'hours employed per week' variables, had significant effects on the level of burnout. These variables include length of service with the organization for 3-10 years or 11 years and more ( $b = -.142, p < .0001$ ;  $b = -.136, p < .0001$ , respectively), supervisory role ( $b = .126, p < .0001$ ), promotion ( $b = .134, p < .0001$ ), merit increase ( $b = .075, p < .0001$ ), salary ( $b = .040, p < .0001$ ), and intent to work for the organization in two years ( $b = .252, p < .0001$ ).

Results of the regression analysis in Model 6 in Table 13 indicates that competence along with the other significant predictors of burnout account for 55.2 % of the variance in the respondents' level of burnout ( $R^2 = .552$ ). Table 14 summarizes the findings in Model 6.

**Table 14. Findings in Model 6 (Competence Dimension of Perceived Empowerment)**

Research question 2	There is significantly inverse relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees
Hypothesis	Hypothesis 2.2. was supported Female employees who perceive higher level of competence in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout
Significant predictors of burnout	Competence Among socio-demographic characteristics: Age 40-49 years old, African-American, Hispanic/Mexican-American, & Graduate Among employment characteristics: 20-39 hours per week employed, Length of service for 3-10 years, Length of service for 11 years and more, Supervisory role, Promotion, Merit increase, Salary, Intent to work for the organization in two years

*The Effect of Valued Goals on Burnout*

Hypothesis 2.3. Female employees who perceive higher levels of valued goals in the workplace will report lower levels of burnout.

The third dimension of perceived empowerment is valued goals. An overview of the research question, hypothesis, and the variables included in the regression model to examine the effects of valued goals on burnout while controlling for the effects of socio-demographic and employment characteristics is presented in Table 15.

**Table 15. Research Question, Hypothesis, and Variables in Model 7**

Research Question	Hypothesis	Variables included in the Model
Research question 2: What is the relationship between the dimensions of Perceived Empowerment and the level of Burnout among women employees in the workplace?	Hypothesis 2.3.: Women employees who perceive higher levels of Valued Goals in the workplace will report lower levels of Burnout.	Burnout Valued Goals Socio-demographic characteristics Employment characteristics

Table 16 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis of the effect of valued goals on the level of burnout. Consistent with hypothesis 2.3, the valued goals variable was found to be significantly associated with related to the level of burnout when controlling for socio-demographic and employment characteristics ( $b=.756$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Female employees who perceive higher levels of valued goals in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout. Hypothesis 2.3. was supported and the data shows a significant inverse relationship between valued goals and burnout. Therefore, all of the three dimensions of perceived empowerment—control, competence, and valued goals—were found to be significantly related to the level of burnout.



**Table 16. The Effect of Valued Goals on Burnout**

Variable	Model 7
<b>Valued Goals</b>	.756***
<b><u>Socio-demographic Characteristics</u></b>	
Age [39 yrs or less]	
40-49	.038**
50+	.065***
Race/Ethnicity [Anglo-American]	
African-American	.038**
Hispanic/Mexican-American	.098***
Others	.025
Education [high school or less]	
College	-.055***
Graduate	-.055**
Household wage earner status	
Primary wage earner	-.012
Other wage earner in household	.014
Number of persons in the household	-.004
<b><u>Employment Characteristics</u></b>	
Hours employed per week [less than 20 hrs]	
20-39 hours	.168**
40 or more hours	-.039
Length of service with the organization [2 yrs or less]	
3-10 years	-.055***
11 years and more	-.083***
Supervisory role	.004
Promotion	.041***
Merit increase	.029**
Salary	.021***
Intent to work for the organization in two years	.202***
<b>Intercept</b>	.773***
<b>R-squared</b>	.681

Note: Reference category for all variables in brackets.

Cell entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.0001

Among the socio-demographic characteristics, six variables were found to have a significant effect on the level of burnout. Both measures of age such as 'age of 40 to 49 years old' and '50 years and older', had a significant association with burnout ( $b = .038, p < .01$ ;  $b = .065, p < .0001$ , respectively). In these two age groups, female employees reported less burnout than those who are 39 years old or younger. Similarly, two of the three measures of race/ethnicity, African-American and Hispanic/Mexican-American, were also found to have a positive relationship with the level of burnout that was statistically significant ( $b = .038, p < .01$ ;  $b = .098, p < .0001$ , respectively).

Among the employment characteristics recorded in survey, seven variables had a significant effect on the level of burnout. These variables include 20-39 hours employed per week ( $b = .168, p < .01$ ), length of service with the organization for 3-10 years or 11 years and more ( $b = -.055, p < .0001$ ;  $b = -.083, p < .0001$ , respectively), promotion ( $b = .041, p < .0001$ ), merit increase ( $b = .029, p < .0001$ ), salary ( $b = .021, p < .0001$ ), and intent to work for the organization in two years ( $b = .202, p < .0001$ ).

In Model 7, valued goals and the significant predictors of burnout among socio-demographic characteristics and employment characteristics collectively explain 68.1 % of the variance in the level of burnout. Table 17 presents a summary of findings in Model 7.

**Table 17. Findings in Model 7 (Valued Goals Dimension of Perceived Empowerment)**

Research question 2	There is significantly inverse relationship between the dimensions of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees
Hypothesis	Hypothesis 2.3. was supported Female employees who perceive higher levels of valued goals in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout
Significant predictors of burnout	Valued Goals  Among socio-demographic characteristics: Age 40-49 years old, Age 50 years old and older, African-American, Hispanic/Mexican-American, College, & Graduate  Among employment characteristics: 20-39 hours per week employed, Length of service for 3-10 years, Length of service for 11 years and more, Promotion, Merit increase, Salary, Intent to work for the organization in two years

### Summary

The empowerment construct as a whole has a significant relationship with the level of burnout, supporting hypothesis 1.1 and all three dimensions of perceived empowerment also have a significant effects on the level of burnout, supporting hypothesis 2.1, hypothesis 2.2, and hypothesis 2.3. The Model with empowerment construct as a whole (Model 4) explains the largest percentage of the variance in the

level of burnout (79.2 %), followed by Model with control dimension (Model 5: 69.4 %), Model with valued goals dimension (Model 7: 68.1 %) and Model with competence dimension (Model 6: 55.2. %).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

In this study, the relationship between the level of perceived empowerment and the level of burnout among female employees in the workplace was examined. This relationship was examined through the three dimensions of perceived empowerment: control, competence, and valued goals. In order to control the potential confounding effects of background factors, such as socio-demographic and employment characteristics, these characteristics were taken into account in the analysis of the survey data. After analysis, the study revealed that female employees who perceive higher levels of control, competence, or valued goals—empowerment—on the job experience lower levels of burnout. In addition to the effect of empowerment or the dimensions of empowerment, various background factors influence the level of burnout perceived by female employees in the workplace. In this chapter, the key findings of the data analyses in the present study will be discussed in relation to relevant previous research.

#### **The Effects of Background Factors on Burnout**

##### Socio-demographic Characteristics

This study found that various socio-demographic variables influenced the level of burnout perceived by female employees in the workplace. Those variables

include the age of survey respondents who were aged 50 or older, race/ethnicity of African-American or Hispanic/Mexican-American, and a bachelor's or graduate-level education.

The first finding, that a subject's age is a significant predictor of burnout, is comparable with the findings of burnout studies by Schwab and Iwanicki (1982), Williams (1989), Cordes and Dougherty (1993), Oktay (1992), Poulin and Walter (1993), and Maslach (2003). This finding—that the older the employee, the lower the level of burnout she experiences—may indicate that older workers have more realistic expectations about their jobs (Oktay, 1992, p. 437). Further, this study found that African-American females report more burnout than Anglo-American females, a result which supports the findings from recent research of human service workers' burnout (Norwood, 2002; Evans, Bryant, Owens, & Koukos, 2004). Finally, as with Streepy's study (1981), a higher level of education was found to be significantly associated with a lower level of burnout in the present study.

With regard to Hispanic/Mexican-American ethnicity, previous studies in burnout and burnout related areas, such as job satisfaction, report that Hispanic employees tended to have lower levels of burnout or higher levels of job satisfaction than other ethnic groups (Norwood, 2002; McNeely, 1989; Bartell, 1981; Lankau & Scandura, 1996). This study, however, shows that being Hispanic/Mexican-American decreases an employee's burnout score, indicating that Hispanic/Mexican-American employees have a higher level of burnout than other ethnicities. Because

the result from this study is due to suppression, this study's finding is not contrary to the findings of the previous studies and comparisons between this study's finding and the findings from previous studies must be made with caution. For example, as stated in Chapter Four where the survey data was analyzed, in this study's multiple regression analysis Hispanic/Mexican-American race/ethnicity was found to act as a suppressor of variances in empowerment which are irrelevant to burnout. Because of this suppression, the regression coefficient for Hispanic/Mexican-American is less than zero; therefore, the prediction for burnout score actually decreases (indicating higher levels of burnout) when respondents indicated that they were Hispanic/Mexican-American. Because both Hispanic/Mexican-American and feelings of empowerment are positively correlated with burnout, it would be typically expected that the prediction for burnout score increases (indicating having a lower levels of burnout) as the unit in Hispanic/Mexican-American increases (being Hispanic/Mexican-American). However, this was not what the data showed. For this reason, it cannot be said that this study's finding is contrary to the findings of the previous studies.

As stated in chapter four, correlations between burnout and various socio-demographic characteristics were very low. In spite of these very weak relationships, statistically significant relationships were found to exist between burnout and these socio-demographic variables when the multiple regression analyses were applied.

These statistically significant effects of various socio-demographic variables on the level of burnout appeared to be partly due to the present study's large sample size.

### Employment Characteristics

Among employment characteristics, it was found that the number of hours respondents worked per week (20-39 hours employed per week), the number of years they had been with their organization (length of service with the organization for 3-10 years or 11 years and more), their salary level, whether or not they had a supervisory role or received a promotion or merit increase, and their intent to work for the organization in two years were all significant predictors of the level of burnout.

Comparable with a previous study (Norwood, 2002), the present study reveals that the length of service with the organization affects the level of an employee's burnout. Burnout increases as length of service with the organization increases. In addition, this study finds that female employees in a supervisory role experience less burnout than those who are not supervisors. This finding is similar to the findings of Pretty, McCharthy, and Catano's (1992) study. They found that female employees in non-manager roles experience more burnout than those in manager roles. These findings suggest that working in a supervisory role is associated with a lower degree of burnout. According to Thomas (1991), being a supervisor is a factor also associated with the greater degree of perceived



empowerment of professionals in both the human service and private industries; supervisors, in this case, are distinguished from non-supervisors in terms of their “position within the organizational hierarchy, scope of responsibility, and differences in how [they are] perceived as a result of one’s status as a supervisor” (Thomas, 1991, p. 137). These differences are attributed to the empowering effect of supervisor status.

As in previous studies (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993), promotion was found to be a significant predictor of burnout. Those employees who had received a promotion during the past two years experience lower levels of burnout than those who have not. Receiving a merit increase was also found to have significant association with burnout. Employees who received a merit increase during the past two years report lower levels of burnout than those who have not. Because promotions and merit increases are formal forms of recognition for individual employee’s contributions to the organization, reward systems such as these serve a very important role in convincing employees that their personal contributions are valuable to the organizations and that excellent work is counted and appreciated by their employers (Conger, 1989).

Salary was also found to have a statistically significant effect on female employees’ burnout; the higher the salary levels of a female employee, the lower the level of burnout she experiences. This association between salary and burnout is consistent with LeCroy and Rank (1986). In addition, in some studies (Koeske, G. F.,

Kirk, Koeske, R. D. & Rauktis, 1994; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1991), salary has been found to be a reliable predictor of job satisfaction, another factor which is related to burnout.

The present study found that when an employee intended to work for the organization in two years this had a negative relationship to burnout scores, indicating the intention to stay with an organization is associated with lower levels of burnout. If employees who intend to leave their organizations remain in their positions due to scarcity of other employment opportunities, eventually such dissatisfied workers may become burnt out. This can result in various problems from personal trauma to deterioration in the quality of services (Jayartne & Chess, 1984).

According to Poulin (1994), numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between worker retention and job satisfaction (Block, Yuker, Campbell, & Melvin, 1964; Butler, 1961; Harrison, 1980; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Poulin & Walter, 1992), and a negative correlation between job satisfaction and burnout (LeCroy & Rank, 1987; Meadow, 1981; Pines & Maslach, 1978; Poulin & Walter, 1992); therefore, logically, the relationship between retention and burnout is negative, a finding that indicates this study appears to be in line with previous research.

Similar to the correlations between burnout and the socio-demographic characteristics, most correlations between burnout and various employment characteristics were very low. Therefore, the statistically significant relationship

between burnout and various background factors found in this study from multiple regression analyses appears to be partly due to the large sample size.

### **The Effect of Empowerment on Burnout**

The present study demonstrates the significant effects of perceived empowerment on the level of burnout when controlling for socio-demographic and employment characteristics. Female employees who perceive higher levels of empowerment in the workplace reported lower levels of burnout. This finding is in line with previous studies suggesting a significant relationship between empowerment and burnout of employees in the human service sector (Thomas, 1991; Rawana, 2001), as well as in education (Baldo, 2003).

Thomas's (1991) study described empowerment as "empowering management practices" while Rawana (2001) measured psychological empowerment using Spreitzer's empowerment scale. Baldo (2003) also used a different measurement of empowerment, the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES), which included six subscales: decision making, personal growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. Although these previous studies employed different definitions and measurements of empowerment, they found similar results to those of the current study, indicating that empowerment influences employees' burnout in the human service and education sectors as well.

## **The Effects of the Dimensions of Empowerment**

### The Effect of Control on Burnout

Among Spreitzer's four dimensions of empowerment, self-determination and impact theoretically correspond to the dimension of control on the present study's empowerment scale. This study's finding of the significant relationship between the employee's level of control and burnout concurs with the findings of other recent studies (Baldo, 2003; Rawana, 2001; Miranda, 1999).

In Baldo's study (2003), it was found that impact significantly predicted burnout. Also, Rawana (2001) reported that self-determination and impact—two of Spreitzer's four dimensions of empowerment—were found to be significantly associated with burnout. In addition, Miranda (1999) reported that Spreitzer's "self-determination" was significantly related to the personal accomplishment subscale of Maslach's Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1994).

### The Effect of Competence on Burnout

Consistent with Rawana's (2001) study, the present study reveals that competence is a significant predictor of burnout. Also, this finding concurs with the results of both Baldo's (2003) and Miranda's (1999) studies. Baldo's (2003) reported that self-efficacy, which is conceptually related to sense of competence, was found to significantly predict burnout. Also, Miranda's (1999) study reported that Spreitzer's

“competence” was significantly related to a personal accomplishment subscale of Maslach’s Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1994).

### The Effect of Valued Goals on Burnout

In this study, the valued goals variable was found to have a significant impact on burnout. Although the valued goals variable has no exact counterpart in Spreitzer’s formulation of the dimensions of empowerment, Spreitzer’s “meaning” dimension seems to be conceptually comparable to this category. This study’s finding that there is a significant relationship between valued goals and burnout is consistent Miranda’s findings (1999). In her study, meaning, one of the dimensions of Spreitzer’s empowerment scale, was significantly associated with the personal accomplishment subscale of Maslach’s Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1994).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH**

This chapter begins with implications for management, is followed by implications for social work, and ends with some suggested directions for future research. Finally, some limitations of the present study are then addressed before the conclusion is provided.

#### **Implications for Management**

##### Reward System

In line with the traditional distinction between public and private responsibilities, government organizations are typically in charge of socially-oriented matters, such as providing health and human services, while the private sector has pursued more market-driven business (Matheson, 1998). Therefore, organizations in the private sector are likely to have more plentiful financial resources. Also, the output of work in the private sector tends to yield itself to tangible measurement and is easier to quantify (Thomas, 1991) than the output of human service organizations. In addition, the traditional characteristics of public administration and public policy, such as equality and efficiency (Shelton, 2002), impose more rules and regulations

on work process and leave less flexibility and individuality for the employees in performing their work tasks. These characteristics in governmental health and human service organizations produce a number of barriers for creating a supportive environment for employees in terms of empowerment and burnout.

The difficulty of institutionalizing and increasing the number of competence-based reward systems is one of those barriers. Employee rewards in human service organizations tend to be more frequently based on seniority, while those in private sector organizations tend to be based on competence. This may be due to the limited availability of financial resources for rewarding employees in human service organizations, the less quantifiable nature of the output of human service employees' work to connect reward with worker performance, and the lesser amount of fiscal discretion that human service organizations have in using public funding to provide employees with rewards, in comparison with private sector organizations (Thomas, 1991).

In highly structured organizations like governmental organizations, the employee can feel trapped by bureaucracies (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Especially, in large organizations, it is difficult for employees to develop the sense that their work makes a difference. It is "easy for organization members to feel lost in the hierarchy and for their achievements to be visible, for recognition not to be received for personal contributions" (Conger, 1989, p. 19). A reward system is suggested as a useful tool to enhance subordinates' sense of importance and contribution by

providing visibility and recognition (Conger, 1989; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995).

Rewards such as promotions and merit increases were found to be a significant predictor of burnout in the present study as well as in previous burnout studies (Oktay, 1992; Poulin & Walter, 1993). From empowerment literature, reward systems are suggested as one of the important empowering conditions for employees. Non-arbitrary reward allocations (contingent rewards), the high incentive value of rewards, rewards based on competence, and innovation-based rewards are recommended (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

#### Access to Resources

This study demonstrates that female employees' perceived competence is related to burnout. A lack of access to appropriate resources in performing a job hinders the employees' accomplishment and thereby undermines their sense of competence. The adequacy of organizational resources is also reported to be related with burnout (Poulin & Walter, 1993). Employees are subject to be under stress and are at risk of developing burnout when monetary or non-monetary resources necessary for them to perform their job are not available (Hobfoll, 1989). In comparison with the employees of private sector organizations, human service employees reported that they had less access to appropriate resources (Thomas, 1991). Given the limited financial resources in human service organizations,



managerial intervention should be placed on how to distribute resources. Highly centralized organizational resources are suggested as an undesirable organizational characteristic which leads to employees' sense of powerlessness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Therefore, the de-centralized distribution of organizational resources is recommended to enhance the employee's sense of control, sense of competence, and perceived empowerment.

### Professional Training

Koeske et al. (1994) reported that opportunities for professional development along with a sense of achievement and mastery have been found to be strong predictors of social workers' job satisfaction, the latter of which is negatively correlated with burnout. Also, treating professional training as an opportunity for professional development is very important for human service professionals, for it prepares and encourages them to have a sense of mastery in performing their work.

Conger (1989) argued that "an individual's sense of mastery through actual experience is the most effective means of increasing self-efficacy" (p. 21). The employee's genuine experience of mastery, when directly connected to the job, is called "enactive attainment" (Bandura, 1977, 1986, as cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 477), and this enactive attainment is the most important source for providing empowering information to employees regarding their competence.

Furthermore, professional training is also a very useful method for allowing employees to have the “vicarious experience” (Bandura, 1977, 1986, cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 477) of observing other comparable workers who do their job effectively. In order to provide this vicarious experience, it is suggested that modeling techniques be employed during job training (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

As previously stated the present study reveals that competence and perceived empowerment have a significant impact on female employees’ level of burnout. Providing professional training to employees is recommended to heighten their perceived competence and empowerment.

### Leadership

Charismatic or transformational leadership has been described by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) as providing the articulation of a meaningful vision or mission of the work to the employees. This meaningful vision or mission enhances the intrinsic value of the employees’ goal accomplishment. Providing appealing goals is an essential element of empowering leadership, and it is necessary to enable the employees to visualize how their work plays a useful part in accomplishing worthwhile aims (Conger, 1989). Appealing goals energize employees to extend themselves to pursue self-importance, being influential, and working toward valuable causes by taking a part in achieving those goals (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, as cited in Conger, 1989).

The present study demonstrates that valued goals, as a dimension of empowerment, significantly influence female employees' levels of burnout. Given this finding, providing appealing goals and a meaningful vision of both the work and the organization, while creating a trustful and supportive atmosphere within that organization, are essential for employees to become empowered and less burnt out. The role of leadership is crucial to building a supportive environment for employee empowerment and for removing barriers that cause burnout problems in the workplace. Hence, it is recommended that leaders maximize the energizing impact of inspirational leadership in order to help female employees internalize the valued goals of the organization and to be integrated as an essential member of the working community running toward accomplishing the goals of the organization.

Those in organizational leadership roles should first be aware of the likely causative relationship between employees' perceptions of empowerment and the consequent level of burnout in order to address burnout problems. This relation is perhaps especially germane for female employees that may be dealing with the doubly-demanding role of being effective at work and while at the same time having home roles with challenging time and energy demands.

### Supervisory Style

Managerial empowerment efforts need to pay attention to the development of supportive cultures and interpersonal trust, both of which are reported to be conceptual antecedents of perceived empowerment (Peter, Byrnes, Choi, Fegan, & Miller, 2002) and which are also associated with the valued goal dimension of perceived empowerment in this study. The employees' psychological empowerment is a vital antecedent of organizational effectiveness (Schleusener, 1999). Investing in a supportive workplace climate that provides both opportunities and recognition for employee creativity, dedication, and innovation (another manifestation of empowerment) will pay substantial dividends in lower levels of burnout. Such a climate is best achieved through supervisory styles that genuinely seek participation and also through efforts to push job design and responsibility for standards and performance to all work levels.

Open, respectful communication and interpersonal trust are critical for all employees and no less for female employees. Also, this communication and trust can be nurtured by the empowering practices of supervisors. Thomas (1991) reports that employees feel powerless when they are not informed about decisions in the organization in a timely fashion, while, conversely, employees perceive empowerment when their input and suggestions are inquired after by their supervisor. When supervisors interact with their subordinates in a manner that

shows trust, respect, and confidence in those subordinates, the subordinates feel empowered (London, 1992).

Supervisors can contribute to foster their subordinates' perceived empowerment by using modeling techniques. If supervisor works as a role model, it is possible for subordinates to learn that they can work in a similar manner to their supervisors and that, therefore, their performance can be improved (Conger, 1989). In addition, supervisors are recommended to use "words of encouragement, verbal feedback, and other forms of social persuasion" to empower their subordinates (Conger, 1986, cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 497).

### Participative Management

Bureaucracies involve rigid lines of authority and decision making. They undermine the professional concept of morality and force the worker to face ethical dilemmas. The bureaucracy is criticized because it does not consider variations in the work that organizations perform. It was suggested that human service organizations should increase non-bureaucratic characteristics such as the use of nonroutine tasks, nonhierarchical lines of communications, horizontal patterns of authority, minimal specialization, maximum input on policy decisions, minimal established power, and minimal general rules (Arches, 1991).

Power, autonomy, and decision-making are important elements of empowerment (Peter, Byrnes, Choi, Fegan, & Miller, 2002). Decentralized

responsibilities provide an opportunity for employees to exercise their individual talents and energy successfully and also to experience a sense of ownership and self-importance (Conger, 1989).

In light of these facts, organizational leaders need to be sensitive to the bureaucratic barriers that hinder the work performance of female employees such as imposing excessive channels for work processes and decisions. Managers should encourage female employees to exercise autonomy and control over their work in order for them to be responsible for their own work performance and to feel competency from the fulfillment of their duties. This responsibility should be matched with authority for the work in order for female workers not to be stressed out or feel alienation.

In addition, managers need to encourage female employees to actively participate in the decision making process for issues related to their own work and work life. Further, management should motivate female employees to participate in strategic planning and organizational change planning in order for those employees not to feel isolated from the changes and improvement of organizations. Leither (1991) noted that the ability to affect organizational policies, in particular those with a direct influence on an employee's job, was related to a susceptibility to burnout.

Such efforts to change organizations for the purpose of empowering employees must begin with the evaluation of organizational conditions that promote a sense of powerlessness among the employees. Also, assessments of the capabilities

and current state of employees must precede before introducing new systems and changes on job designs for employee empowerment (Conger, 1989).

## **Implications for Social Work Practice**

### Professional Training

According to Williamson (1996), people who value intrinsic rewards, such as helping others, are common in the social services. They view their jobs from an expressive orientation. The people with these expressive orientations tend to seek intrinsic rewards which refer to meaning and satisfaction in the completion of their work and in the goal toward which they work. Such individuals search for meaning in the work process itself and treat it as a reward, rather than pay or benefits. Expressively oriented workers are perhaps more likely than instrumentally oriented workers to feel frustrated with their job if they perceive themselves as ineffective, even if pay is adequate. It was reported intrinsic job rewards, such as working with people and a desire to contribute to society, are substantially related to workers' evaluations of their jobs (Williamson, 1996).

Since the basic element of professional status is continuous professional development, a crucial organizational method for increasing perceived competence and decreasing burnout is to support employees with professional development opportunities. Poulin (1994) claims that social workers value professional

development. Therefore, social work organizations should make an effort to support their employees' participation in professional conferences and workshops. These activities help social workers to develop their professional knowledge and skills and to perceive themselves as effective and competent. It is also suggested that social work organizations provide their employees with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills through extensive programs of in-service training and continuing education (Jayaratne & Himple, 1990). If social workers cannot enjoy these opportunities for professional development because of financial restraints on their organizations, it may have a long-term negative impact on their performance (Poulin, 1994).

Clinical social workers' jobs demand a high level of emotional involvement from them, and they deal with problems which are "more chronic, emotion-laden and pathological than those addressed by private industry professionals" (Thomas, 1991, p. 134). These factors can lead to the employees feeling stressed (Oktay, 1992). The work of social workers comes with inherent barriers that keep them from attaining a concrete sense of achievement. This is due to the fact that their work forces them to deal with highly severe problems, the possibility of relapse of those problems, and the low measurability of outcomes (Thomas, 1991). Therefore, in-service training should be utilized to assist social workers in understanding about empowerment—along with its dimensions, such as control, competence, and valued goals—and its relationship to burnout. Also, in-service training can be used to educate social



workers and their supervisors about symptoms that accompany the initial stages of burnout. It is important to identify burnout problems as early as possible and to address the factors causing burnout in its early stages before subsequent degrees of burnout are intensified. Once social workers are educated about the factors that contribute to burnout, how to identify burnout syndrome, the relationship between perceived empowerment and burnout, and the interventions recommended for burnout problems, they can work to educate employees in health and human services as well as employees in other settings, including private industry organizations.

### Interpretive Intervention

There are two kinds of interventions that are useful for empowering employees. The first is to remove external conditions that induce employees' powerlessness and to equip organizations with empowering structures and supportive cultures with effective management strategies. The second is to assist employees so that they can more receive information pertaining to their personal efficacy more efficiently through necessary interventions. Because the restructuring of organizational conditions is not always possible, and because it sometimes may not be sufficient for certain employees to perceive empowerment and to be protected from being burnt out, interpretive intervention is recommended for certain employees.

The employee's perception of empowerment is formed by objective external events as well as the way the employees construe those external events; this is called interpretive style. In other words, an interpretive style is the way in which the employees play a role for their own empowerment or disempowerment and is composed by the styles of attribution, evaluating, and envisioning (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

An attribution style which attributes failures to internal, stable, global causes leads employees to lower levels of perceived empowerment. On the other hand, an attribution style which attributes failures to specific, external, transient causes leads employees to perceive higher levels of empowerment. An evaluating style relates to a belief system as in Ellis' rational emotive therapy (RET). The absolutistic standards of the dysfunctional style of evaluating result in a decrease in the employees' perception of empowerment. Envisioning style relates to visualizations of future events. Employees with a tendency to anticipate success and avoid imagining failure tend to perceive higher empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

The interpretive styles are proposed as habits that can be changed through interventions. The intervention for interpretive style involves helping the employee to be conscious of their own interpretive style, their ongoing interpretations, and the consequences of those interpretations and to practice more functional interpretive styles (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

It is recommended that employers provide interpretive interventions for employees whose burnout problems are related to low perceived empowerment, specifically to the dysfunctional interpretive style. The interpretive intervention can be used by Employment Assistance Program specialists or occupational social workers to assist employees in perceiving a greater degree of empowerment and to more effectively deal with certain stressful environmental conditions.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The findings of the present research have generated a number of recommendations for future research. Future studies might wish to examine how empowerment and burnout manifest themselves in men and women with similar work and family obligations. Some questions these studies might pose are: “Do single women and single men, who possibly face less demand from family roles, suffer less burnout even when their empowerment is low?” Or, “Does the existence of family roles provide enriching experiences and empowerment that may be lacking at work?” “What role do age, income, and race/ethnicity play when examined between genders?” And, finally, “Are both men and women equally affected by these results?”

Another area that needs additional exploration is the relationship among the implementation of various empowering initiatives in the workplace, the level of perceived empowerment, and the level of burnout for female employees since the

conceptual relationship between implementation of “empowering acts” in the workplace, the level of perceived empowerment, and the level of burnout of female employees has not been examined in human service organization setting.

This study examined the impact of race/ethnicity on the level of burnout and found there was an association between the race/ethnicity and the level of burnout. However, the difference of the race/ethnicity in supervisor and supervisee dyad was not included in the present investigation. This suggests that there is room to explore the relationship between the race/ethnicity of supervisor and supervisee dyad. Knowing the level of burnout of supervisees would be useful for understanding burnout phenomenon better in terms of race/ethnicity, given the impact of race/ethnicity on burnout demonstrated from the present study and the importance of the supervisor’s role in empowering employees suggested in empowerment literature.

Additional variables which could potentially have an influence on the level of empowerment or the level of burnout, but for which no data were available in this study, include variables such as organizational rank, the type of job, and whether the job is regular or temporary. These variables would provide information pertaining to the employees’ status in the formal structure of the workplace and their formal source of power in that workplace. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to explore the impact of these variables on empowerment and burnout in future research.

Finally, there remain various other variables with which empowerment and burnout could be associated. For example, given the energizing effect of leadership on employees' empowerment, an examination of leadership styles in health and human service organizations and their impact on health and human service employees' empowerment and burnout would be useful. In addition, further research to investigate empowerment and burnout in relation to service quality is suggested. Service quality is an important outcome of organizations' accountability and employees' effectiveness, as well as an indicator of client-centered practices pursuing client empowerment.

### **Limitations**

The following limitations need to be taken into account when the results of the present study are interpreted. These limitations could serve as a starting point when pondering future research efforts that wish to produce a better understanding of empowerment and burnout in health and human service organizations by addressing the limitations of this study.

First, the participants in this study are state employees in the state of Texas. The sample of this study is considerably large. However, this study's participants are limited only to the state of Texas. Information is not available to compare the characteristics of this study's participants with the larger population of female employees in all health and human service organizations in the U.S. Any

generalizations to the totality of all female employees in the health and human service organizations in the U.S. must thus be made with caution.

Second, this study is based on a cross-sectional design. Therefore, the study design does not show true causality between the variables. Based on the theoretical support pertaining to the effect of empowerment on burnout, and the empirical evidence of associations between these two variables, empowerment was proposed and supported as a predictor of burnout. However, the direction of causality between empowerment and burnout may be reversed or the relationship between empowerment and burnout may be reciprocal. Because of cross-sectional nature of the data, any assessment of the true causality between the variables is limited.

A third caution is that in the analyses of this study, employment characteristics such as hours employed per week, supervisory role, and salary indirectly provide information about the status or the position that each respondent occupies in the organization. However, organizational rank or the employee's type of job are not included in the statistical analysis of the study because the data used for this study does not contain those variables. Since the organizational rank or job type would both be meaningful indicators of formal sources of power in the workplace, the inclusion of such variables in the analyses would have been desirable for this study. Therefore, not having those variables in the analyses is a limitation of the study. Nonetheless, a formal position that an employee held in the organization is not equal to their access to information, support, resources, and opportunities to

complete their work successfully. Also, the inability to access to those things makes employees feel powerless (Miller et al., 2001).

## **Conclusions**

Job burnout in health and human service organizations is an important topic of social work research because of the humanitarian value of the profession, the economic impact of burnout, and the negative consequences of burnout on important clients' outcomes. Because the success of services is closely related to the quality of the human resource in health and human service organizations, including social work agencies, the retention of competent service providers is a critical issue in this field. A study that leads to the prevention of burnout for female employees in health and human services contributes to the quality of work life for those employees, the quality of the services they provide, and the quality of life for their clients.

As Hartman (1991) pointed out, social work researchers who seek empirical evidence to examine human resource conditions should adopt social work's perspective of person-in-environment, not only for understanding their clients but also for illuminating social workers' work lives. However, much of the literature on burnout had been focused on the symptoms of the individual worker in that individual's workplace and, therefore, intervention strategies had centered on individual or group treatment. In spite of the concept of multicausality and the consideration of organizational and societal factors, the focus of intervention

strategies addressing burnout problems tended to concentrate in many cases on a worker's individual characteristics. Such approaches had a tendency to ignore the social relations under capitalism as well as the pressure of bureaucratization in the workplace that may be connected to burnout (Arches, 1991).

Female employees in governmental health and human service organizations work in highly bureaucratized environments. The bureaucratization of social work is similar to that of industry work. Autonomous input is often eroded by sponsor's authority and discipline. Imposed inflexibility, scheduled work hours, and quotas are routine. The source of burnout restrains workers from having an effect on their clients' lives, and as a result "social workers are caught between the privatization of profits and the socialization of the costs from that profit making" (Arches, 1991, p. 202).

Therefore, the conceptual exploration and empirical examination of burnout in relation to empowerment for the female employees in health and human service organizations in this study has substantially contributed 1) to deepening the understanding of burnout for female employees in the workplace and 2) to broadening the efforts to address burnout problems in the workplace in light of empowerment. Also, this study contributes to empowerment literature by demonstrating its relationship with burnout as an employee outcome and demonstrating the relationship between the dimensions of empowerment and burnout. The empirical evidence provided from the present study of the influence of



empowerment and the dimensions of empowerment on the female employees' burnout in health and human service organizations indicates that the more female employees are empowered the lower the levels of burnout they experience, and, also, the more female employees perceive competence, control, or valued goals the lower their level of burnout.

Since perceived empowerment works as a mediating link between empowering acts and employee outcomes, including burnout, the efforts of empowering employees will lead to their heightened perception of empowerment (Laschinger et al., 2001), and, as found in the present study, those heightened feelings of perceived empowerment will lead to lower levels of burnout in the workplace. A number of managerial implications, social work practice implications, and future research implications are recommended from the association of burnout with perceived empowerment and with the dimensions of empowerment revealed in this study. These implications include managerial strategies for creating a supportive working environment and interventions that provide female employees with more effective skills and abilities, helping them address external demands and events as a way both to increase perceived empowerment and to deal with burnout problems in workplace. The future research should be followed to provide useful insights for future directions to intervene into health and human service field.

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